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FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS, THE LESBIAN AND GAY WEEKLY

Gay soldier settles Army battle

*After 10 years, Perry Watkins wins his fight
against anti-gay military policy*

By John Zeh

SEATTLE—The only gay soldier to win a lawsuit against the Department of Defense (DOD) over its anti-gay policy settled his case Feb. 1, gaining full entitlements but foregoing service in the Persian Gulf.

Sgt. Perry Watkins' limited but precedent-setting Supreme Court victory took 10 years. It was worth the wait, said his lawyer, because it could affect new challenges to Pentagon policy requiring discharge of homosexuals in the Gulf war.

"The Army should be put on notice that it can't have it both ways," said attorney James Lobsenz. "If people who are gay are allowed to serve...when they are needed in a war abroad, the Army can't dismiss them when they return home afterward."

In exchange for accepting retirement, Watkins was given \$135,000 in back pay and allowances, full retirement benefits and a retroactive promotion from staff sergeant to sergeant first class.

"A person's sexual orientation should not be an issue for the military at all," Watkins said. "Any able-bodied American who served well should be given equal treatment and opportunity."

Watkins pledged to continue his struggle to resist Pentagon policy and praised the Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project for its help. The Project is an alliance of progressive groups working to overturn the military's homophobic policies. Members include the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Organization for Women, Citizen Soldier, the Women's Equity Action League and the National Lawyers Guild.

"It took 30 years to tear down the Berlin Wall," Watkins said. "It may take us 30 years to tear down the walls of oppression, but I don't have any doubt we can if we stick together."

The military's discrimination is "neither valid nor credible," he said, predicting change in DOD policy that would have positive repercussions for civilians.

Lobsenz represented Watkins without pay through the Washington State ACLU. Its foundation has been the sole financial supporter of the case since its beginning, said Juiya Hampton, the ACLU's legal program director.

"Perry won not only because he was right, but because he was persistent," said Hampton. "He refused to give up on what he believed in. His case shows citizens can win their rights if they are willing to stand up for them."

'Respected and trusted'

Watkins was drafted in 1967 despite his

declaration of "homosexual tendencies" on pre-induction questionnaires. He was open about his sexuality for the next 14 years, as he earned promotions and excellent job evaluations.

In 1971, the Army granted Watkins a security clearance. Four years later a Discharge Board found Watkins suitable for service despite his homosexuality, the ACLU said.

In 1977, Watkins obtained another security check at "secret" levels and acceptance by a special NATO project. Watkins' commander praised his attitude, integrity and suitability, saying, "He has, in fact become one of our most respected and trusted soldiers."

But on March 10, 1981, the DOD implemented new rules declaring homosexuality incompatible with military service, regardless of a soldier's record.

In August of that year the Army said it would discharge Watkins, prompting him to contact the ACLU and file a complaint. It took until May of 1982 for the Federal District Court here to rule that the Army could not discharge Watkins, because it knew about his homosexuality when he was drafted.

In November 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the appeals court ruling.

Although the Watkins decision is narrow, it is a landmark case, said Jim Zais, an openly gay candidate for the Washington City Council. The Watkins victory, said Zais, led to "one of the first decisions by a federal judicial body that the widespread social hostility against lesbians and gay men in and of itself makes such government policies constitutionally suspect." □



Perry Watkins

LOVE & MARRIAGE

IN HINDSIGHTS: LIFE AS A QUEER

Black lesbians and gay men plan conference

*Organizers anticipate that 1000 people will attend the fourth
annual gathering, which will feature political forums, cultural
events, and a spirituality program*

By Chris Nealon

LOS ANGELES—Saying they anticipate their largest turnout to date, organizers for the 1991 National Black Lesbian and Gay conference here are preparing for a week of workshops, strategy meetings, performances and social gatherings. The various events, scheduled for Feb. 9—18, are being organized by the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum (BGLLF).

"This is our fourth annual conference, and we expect between 800 and 1000 people," said Phill Wilson, BGLLF co-chair. Although the conference will include dozens of political forums, Wilson told *GCN*, this year's conference will feature a number of significant cultural events as well. Among these, he said, will be the first public reading from *Brother to Brother*, an anthology of Black gay male writing, and the premier of filmmaker Marlon Riggs's new work, *Anthem*. Wilson added that organizers have also scheduled retrospectives of the films of Riggs and of Michele Parkerson.

Wilson also remarked that *Essence* magazine ran an ad for the conference in its February issue—an ad that he and co-chair Ruth Waters had to fight to place in the magazine. BGLLF filed a legal complaint against *Essence* in November, after the publication decided not to run a BGLLF ad it had initially accepted. At that time, *Essence* spokespeople claimed that they were afraid of alienating their more conservative readers by running a lesbian/gay ad. (See *GCN*, Dec. 16—22, 1990.)

Since then, Wilson said, "We had a meeting with *Essence* to share our concerns with them about homophobia and heterosexism. He added, "We're sure that they will have a commitment to those issues in the future."

Variety of 'Institutes'

George Bellinger, Jr., another conference organizer, told *GCN* that the week will be

broken up into several "Institutes," each with a cluster of workshops, that will address a set of issues. Among these, he said, are AIDS, Women's, and Leadership Institutes. Bellinger, who is Dean of the AIDS Institute, said that in planning the week, his commitment was to "a diversity of workshops."

As a result, he said, "We have people from the CDC [Centers for Disease Control] and NIMH [National Institute of Mental Health] as well as activists."

"It's a real cadre," added Bellinger, commenting on the variety of perspectives on the epidemic that he expects to hear. "But then AIDS crosses so many boundaries."

'Coming to Leadership'

Bellinger has also been involved with the leadership Institute, which he described as a crucial part of the conference. Many Black lesbians and gay men are put in the position of being representatives of either their race or of their sexuality, Bellinger said. Because they may be put into positions of authority they might not otherwise have assumed, he added, Black lesbians and gay men in political organizations may face an extraordinary amount of pressure to succeed.

Accordingly, said Bellinger, the Leadership Institute is about "helping you to take your place. It's about how you come to leadership—or how, sometimes, it comes after you."

For instance, he said, "You may go to a meeting and they say, 'We need a black woman' and you're the only one in the room; or you make [one] statement, and then your name is on everybody's mailing list. And you're thinking, 'What did I do?'"

The other side of the problem of leadership for Black lesbians and gay men, Bellinger said, is the existence of 'old boy' networks that may prevent outsiders from gaining access to political experience. In many large lesbian and gay organizations, Bellinger said,

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Quote of the week

"Q. Where can I get an Operation Desert Storm pinup calendar?"

A. The calendars cost \$16.90 and can be ordered from Rogelio Morales Jr. at RML & Associates. 13324 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 352, Hawthorne, CA, 90250. The calendar's color photographs show seminude females posing in the trappings of war. Morales, an Air Force captain, has promised to donate a portion of his profits to the Yellow Ribbon Foundation, but hasn't yet decided how much. The calendar is also on sale at the Pentagon bookstore in Washington."

—An excerpt from the "Ask the Globe" column in the Boston Globe.

Disability rights group declares 'Freedom Day'

DENVER—A group of disability rights activists sponsored a nationwide "Freedom Day" action against the federal nursing home program Jan 15. Over 1500 people in 21 cities protested outside nursing homes, state health associations, and federal Health and Human Services regional offices.

The purpose of the action, which was coordinated by the American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT), was "to remove the veil of respectability from nursing homes." Said ADAPT's Wade Blank, "Nobody wants to go into a nursing home. That should tell us something."

Mike Auberger, an ADAPT organizer, told *GCN* that the nursing home industry is a "huge business" that "brings in about \$43 billion a year." ADAPT is demanding that the U.S. government rechannel 25 percent of the funds for nursing homes to programs that would offer in-home care for people with disabilities. According to Auberger, that percentage translates into about \$5.5 billion, which would be matched by state funding.

Auberger said that although the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Louis Sullivan, knows of ADAPT's requests, he refuses to meet with the group because "he doesn't negotiate with radical organizations." ADAPT organizers said they will again demand a meeting with Sullivan in late April, when the group will hold a protest at the Health Care Finance Administration building in Baltimore.

"We want to move money away from nursing homes, and not create any new financing issues in the process," said Auberger. "[The attendant services program] is thus a real viable option for the future."

—Elizabeth Yukins

Women's club cited for discrimination

CHICAGO—A judge ruled Jan. 31 that the "no males" employment policy at a local women's health club is an illegal act of discrimination. In her decision, Judge Ann Claire Williams found that the club's sex-based hiring practices were in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

According to the *New York Times*, the health club's lawyer argued that the presence of men in the club would be "a violation of trust," because the club focuses much of its advertising on its women-only status. The defense attorney, Fran Krasnow, said that the hiring of male personnel would violate the club's policy because "physical contact is sometimes required between instructors and members."

Williams's ruling resulted from a suit filed against the club, Women's Workout World, by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In her decision, Williams stated that the club failed to prove that there was factual basis for its hiring policy or that there were no reasonable alternatives to its gender-based employment rules.

Krasnow said that the club will probably appeal the ruling in United States District Court.

—Elizabeth Yukins

AIDS funds awarded

BOSTON—The Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC) awarded funds totaling \$80,000 to four community-based AIDS education and outreach programs Feb 1. The money will be used to conduct AIDS/HIV education and prevention programs in local communities of color.

"We've come a long way in the short time that the MAC has addressed the need to fund innovative, culturally and linguistically appropriate programs to stop this epidemic among people of color," said the organization's executive director, Wayne Wright. "But we need to continue to empower each other with greater collaboration and more targeted, effective

programs that can change behaviors and promote more healthful habits."

The four groups that will receive MAC funds this year are: Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción; Women Inc. (through the Consortium of Black Health Centers and Directors); an Alliance of Haitian Agencies (through the Haitian AIDS Project); and the Latino Health Network.

MAC is funded through the federal Centers for Disease Control and the state Department of Public Health. Over the past two years, MAC has awarded more than \$200,000 in grants to community-based organizations.

—Elizabeth Yukins

S. Dakota considers anti-choice bill

PIERRE, S.D. — Less than a month after Utah legislators passed a restrictive anti-abortion bill, their counterparts in South Dakota are pushing a similar proposal through the House of Representatives.

The South Dakota bill, which was endorsed by the House Judiciary Committee Feb. 5, would allow abortions only in cases of rape, incest, or a threat to the physical health of the woman. The legislation would also permit abortions of fetuses with "severe handicaps."

"They're voting in the House tomorrow [Feb. 7], and we don't think we have a chance," said Barbara Goodman of the South Dakota affiliate of the National Organization for Women (NOW).

However, Goodman told *GCN* that she thought "maybe" abortion activists could make some headway in the Senate. "There are 12 women; and the Republicans have only a one-vote majority — although that's not to say that every Democrat is pro-choice," she said.

Goodman also said that lobbyists in Pierre are going to try to attach an appropriations bill to the anti-abortion legislation. That money would be set-aside money for a Supreme Court challenge to the bill if it becomes law, or to establish funds "for all the children that will be born because of this law."

—Chris Nealon

Gay camp plans nixed

MIDDLE TORCH KEY, Fla.— Charging that state environmental officials were discriminating against them, two lesbians have abandoned their plans to create an all-lesbian/gay camp on a small island here. Officials arrested the two women last spring, claiming that their activities were disrupting the island's delicate ecological balances.

"The fact that we were gay made it more a thorn in their side as they—the state and county—went after us," said Lynne Parker, one of the women. "Had we been the Boy Scouts of America, they probably would have funded the project."

According to the Fort Pierce, Fla. *Tribune*, Parker and Linda Shearer bought one-third of a 120-acre island nearby in order to create T.H.E. (Total Homosexual Environment) Island of the Keys. The two women were arrested in May on a felony pollution charge and eight environmental misdemeanor charges.

Parker and Shearer pleaded no contest to two charges. They agreed to remove boulders and mulch bags, and to plant some rare species on the island.

Jon Ellsworth, chief assistant attorney for Monroe County, said the state had not discriminated against the women. "The case was handled without regard to the defendants' sexual preference," he said.

—Chris Nealon

Doctor defies 'coercive' AIDS policy

DENVER—Calling Colorado's AIDS research procedures "coercive," a scientist here has defied state authorities and refused to report the names of study patients with HIV and AIDS. Dr. Robert T. Schooley, head of the infectious diseases division of the University of Colorado Health Sciences division, has asked for a federal "certificate of confidentiality" that would allow him to keep the names private.

"This information belongs in a doctor's office, not in a mainframe computer data base," Schooley told the *Los Angeles Times*. "The decision to participate in research becomes very coercive if individuals are told that 'Unless you are willing to have your name on a state list, you can't have access to the newest approaches in AIDS therapy,'" he said.

Schooley added that he will continue to defy the Colorado law whether or not he receives a federal certificate.

—Chris Nealon



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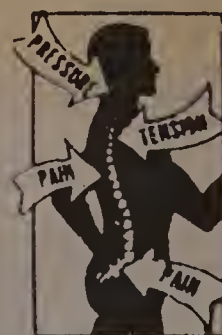
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Porn pictures deemed sexual harassment

A judge finds that the presence of pornography in the workplace contributes to a 'boys' club atmosphere'

By Elizabeth Yukins

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—In a major victory for women's rights advocates, a federal district judge ruled that pornographic pictures are forms of sexual harassment in the workplace. The court decision has been hailed as an important victory for women's equality in non-traditional work environments, yet the case also raises questions about First Amendment freedom of expression rights for workers.

In his Jan. 18 ruling, Judge Howell Melton found that a ship repair yard had contributed to the harassment of a female employee by allowing hard and soft core pornography photos to hang throughout the workplace.

"Being free from such forms of harassment as pornographic pictures is vital for women who work in male-dominated environments," said Judith Kurtz, an attorney at Equal Rights Advocates in San Francisco. "In any place where women traditionally have been excluded, women workers still face a barrage of information telling them they are not welcome." Kurtz told *GCN* that "We can't help the isolation these women feel in their jobs, but this case is crucial in that it averts some of the direct hostility they face."

While civil liberty advocates emphatically support such efforts to end sexual harassment, they also see potential First Amendment problems. Melton banned certain types of expression in the workplace, and civil libertarian groups are wary of the prohibitive implications of his ruling.

"The American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU] has always been at the forefront of litigating on behalf of women's issues, but we will not advance one cause by destroying another," said Paul Joseph, president of the ACLU chapter in Florida. "Workers have First Amendment rights, and although some speech and pictures may offend others, you can't censor it," he told *GCN*, adding "You can't sacrifice First Amendment rights in order to get equality rights."

'Boys' club atmosphere'

When the female shipyard worker, Lois Robinson, filed suit in 1986, six women and 846 men were employed as skilled craft workers at Jacksonville Shipyards, Inc.. No woman had ever been placed in a supervisory position.

In her testimony, Robinson stated that she had made numerous attempts to tell management officials that she found the pornography in the shipyard offensive. These complaints, according to Robinson, only caused her to be further harassed by her shipyard co-workers. One year after Robinson filed suit, JSI established a sexual harassment policy, but the court found that little had been done to actually implement the policy.

In his decision, Melton denounced what he called JSI's "ostrich defense" of claiming that it did not know about the women's work conditions or the presence of sexual harassment in the shipyard. Melton ruled that the posting of "pictured nude and partially nude women" throughout the workplace "is and encourages sexually harassing conduct."

"A pre-existing atmosphere that deters women from entering or continuing in a profession or job is no less destructive to and offensive to workplace equality than a sign declaring 'Men only,'" wrote Melton in his opinion. Melton said that by permitting the controversial pictures to be displayed in the workplace, JSI allowed and endorsed a "boys' club atmosphere" throughout the shipyard that contributed to a debilitating "visual assault on the sensibilities of female workers."

Melton found JSI and two of its senior managers guilty of violating Robinson's rights under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a federal employment anti-discrimination law that makes it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of race or sex.

Melton further ordered JSI to institute a comprehensive sexual harassment policy that was proposed by the National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund (NOW LDEF), the women's advocacy group that assisted Robinson in the suit. The policy establishes clear criteria for defining sexual discrimination in the workplace, and demands prompt education plans and disciplinary tactics to avert further harassment.

"Non-traditional workplaces are hell for

women, and pornography plays a part in this hell," said Alison Wetherfield, director of the legal program at NOW LDEF. She told *GCN* that Robinson's case shows that men can't create sexually harassing hostile work environments in order "to keep women out of well-paying skilled work."

Wetherfield said that she was pleased with Melton's understanding of women's struggles in discriminatory workplaces, and that she hopes that this court decision will have far-reaching effects. The case establishes a new standard of workplace responsibility, she said, adding "Now its up to other employers to take the pornography down or risk being sued."

Wetherfield and other women's rights advocates told *GCN* that they were especially pleased that Melton rejected past court decisions that denied the pertinence of pornography in sexual harassment cases. In previous rulings, said Catherine MacKinnon, an anti-pornography and women's rights lawyer "Pornography was not found to be a recognizable form of sexual harassment because it is present everywhere. It is pervasive throughout society, so you can't object to it in one particular place."

MacKinnon told *GCN* that Robinson's case is different because "it establishes that pornography is harmful in a way that can be recognized by the law," and because "it recognizes that pornography as sexual harassment happens in the workplace, and...it is a violation of Title VII [of the Civil Rights Act]."

Wetherfield said that in Robinson's case, the judge was "impressed by the sexual stereotyping evidence that [NOW LDEF] put forward." It was one of the few times in court history, she said, that the court accepted expert testimony by social research scientists illustrating how women suffer because of the sexualization of the work environment.

"Professors of psychology offered expert testimony on how, when women are the minority in a workplace, sexual stimuli like pornographic pictures become the trigger for stereotyping" and "encourage other [forms] of sexually harassing behavior," said Wetherfield.

Rosemary Dempsey, NOW's Action vice-president, called the Florida ruling a "fabulous decision." She told *GCN* that the ruling profoundly affects women's continued ability to work in difficult, male-dominated employment situations.

"There are many women who can't hold out against the incredible sexual harassment [they face]," and consequently quit their jobs, said Dempsey. Robinson's case, therefore, "has a tremendous economic impact on women" who previously might have been forced out of employment by heavy visual and verbal sexual discrimination tactics.

Dempsey further commented that, "This is a real big victory for lesbians, because a lot of lesbians work in non-traditional jobs." She said that in its defense statements, JSI implied that Robinson was a lesbian and tried to depict her as a "man-hater." She added that JSI argued that the plaintiff disliked the nude pictures only because, in the company's words, she "was not like any regular gal."

ACLU may get involved

Although the ACLU has not yet participated in the suit, the group advocates a more narrowly defined sexual harassment policy than the one Melton JSI to ordered implement. While the NOW LDEF policy prohibits all displays of sexually provocative material, the ACLU's policy says that discriminatory speech and pictures must be "directed at a specific employee...and have definable consequences for the individual victim."

ACLU staff members told *GCN* that the harassment policy established at the shipyard must be clearly defined and respect the workers' freedom of expression rights. "If the court ruling prohibits something in a locker that somebody might just pass by and see, then there is a problem," said the ACLU's Isabelle Pinzler.

Paul Joseph, president of ACLU Florida, told *GCN* that he had not fully reviewed the Robinson case, but that the ruling may be overly prohibitive and therefore violate the workers' First Amendment rights. "The ACLU is very conscious of finding a balance between the rights of workers to be free from sexual harassment, and also the rights of

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Fred Eskam, following a violent encounter with Boston police

Bashers with badges

A community forum in Boston examines police harassment of lesbians and gay men

By Ed Boyce

BOSTON—In response to several recent highly publicized cases of alleged police misconduct, about 80 local activists and community members met Jan. 28 to discuss police harassment of lesbians and gay men. The forum, entitled "When Bashers Wear Badges," was co-sponsored by Queer Nation, the Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance Anti-Violence Project, the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, ACT UP/Boston, City Councilor David Scodras, and State Representative Byron Rushing.

According to forum organizer Michael Cronin, the public meeting was called because "Those who are supposed to be protecting us from violence may be ones who are perpetrating it."

Cronin, who is also chair of the Alliance's Anti-Violence Project, said that organizers worked hard to make the forum "a safe place where people can feel comfortable telling their stories of harassment by the police or police neglect in responding to harassment." To this end, organizers said, they denied a

request by Ann Sanders, Mayor Ray Flynn's liaison to the gay community, that Boston Police Internal Affairs officers be allowed to attend the forum.

During the three-hour meeting, 15 people gave testimony about negative interactions with various police departments around the Boston area. The first speaker was Fred Eskam, who recounted his arrest on DWI charges last November. At the time of the arrest, Eskam said, he had a copy of the *Guide*, a national gay monthly magazine, on the passenger seat of his car.

Eskam said that he was handcuffed throughout his detainment and was subjected to physical abuse and anti-gay verbal attacks. He further said that after he was beaten to the point of bleeding, he was denied medical treatment for several hours. Eskam said he was eventually taken to Carney Hospital, where he received 14 stitches and was verbally harassed by the medical staff.

After being taken back to the police station, Eskam said, he was refused bail and the right to make phone calls for the rest of

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AIDS ads well received

AIDS advocacy groups say the response to public service announcements on television has been overwhelmingly positive

By Elizabeth Yukins

BOSTON—Over the past decade, AIDS advocacy organizations have learned that slick television ads are an effective way of reaching mainstream audiences. Groups across the nation are utilizing public service announcements (PSAs) to teach people about the realities of HIV infection and illness. Locally, the Boston Living Center, a support organization for people with HIV, has begun a major media campaign to reach out to HIV-infected individuals, as well as to raise AIDS awareness throughout the community.

"We are fighting the stigma of HIV by going public," said James Richard, executive director of the Living Center. Richard told *GCN* that the television commercials are meant to create a connection in people's minds between their lives, HIV and the Living Center. Very simply, he explained, the ads say, "This is the virus, and this is where [the Living Center is]."

According to Richard, the commercials are meant to relay two different messages. The 30-second spot features the face of a doctor telling an unseen person that she or he is HIV positive, and then saying, "You need the Boston Living Center." (The purpose of this ad is "high impact," said Richard.) The second commercial is a 60-second spot that presents the Center as a supportive alternative to the isolation that people often feel when they are diagnosed with HIV.

The ads are part of a public service campaign by the Advertising Club of Boston. Stan Bornstein, a partner at DiBona Bornstein & Random, the ad agency that created the Living Center commercials, estimates that over \$500,000 worth of donated production and media time has gone into the PSAs. He told *GCN* that support for the project has been overwhelming, and that "everybody has been eager, and even grateful, to participate."

Richard also said that the ads have been receiving excellent air time. While most

PSAs are aired early in the morning or late at night, Richard said he has heard that the Living Center commercials have run during daytime and prime time evening hours.

Similar national response

Other AIDS advocacy groups throughout the nation told *GCN* that they too have received strong support for their television announcements. Hans Kellner, media coordinator of Action AIDS in Philadelphia, said that his organization has run three PSAs, all of which have been "very successful." Kellner told *GCN* that the local television stations did not "bury the ads in slots where people wouldn't see them," and that the group's volunteer intake calls have doubled since the ads first aired.

Similarly, the staff of the Minnesota AIDS Project has been surprised by the local community's positive response to their PSAs. "What is remarkable is the lack of controversy around [our] ads," said Diane O'Brien, the group's communications director.

O'Brien told *GCN* that in some cases she might have wanted more controversy, just to get the issues discussed. "The fact is that people have been surprisingly supportive for the past five years," she said, adding, "Everybody is looking for controversy, but it's not happening. Here on the community-based level, we've got great support and reasonable news coverage."

Keep it safe

The PSA campaigns have been successful largely because AIDS advocacy groups have learned what television networks will and won't air. Condoms, safe sex discussions, teenage sex, intravenous drug use, and gay sex are among the many issues that are considered too controversial for television audiences. AIDS organizations are very aware of the networks' aversion to controversy, and choose therefore to

Continued on page 6

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The "Community Voices" and "Speaking Out" sections in GCN are parts of our efforts to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings and comments to us, and to respond to ideas expressed within our pages. We welcome all contributions except personal attacks. Copies of letters and "Speaking Out" contributions sent elsewhere are printed on a space available basis only. GCN reserves the right to edit letters and "Speaking Out" contributions for length and clarity, in consultation with the author. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN staff or membership.

All letter and "Speaking Out" contributions must be TYPED and DOUBLE-SPACED. Letters can be NO LONGER THAN TWO PAGES. Speaking Out" contributions can be NO LONGER THAN FOUR PAGES and require a short (one to two sentence) biographical note about the author for inclusion at the end of the article.

Because GCN wishes to encourage dialogue and a diverse representation of perspectives on the letters pages, printing of "Speaking Out" contributions received from authors who have had other "Speaking Outs" appear in GCN recently may be postponed temporarily.

For editing purposes, it is helpful to be able to contact you easily -- please enclose your name, address, and daytime phone number with your letter or article. Thanks.

Send to: Community Voices/Speaking Out, GCN, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

The opinions expressed in "Speaking Out" contributions are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN staff, Board or membership.

were also distributed.

Obviously, 40,000 condoms and hundreds of pamphlets don't just appear like manna from heaven. Activists Warren Patterson and Bill Newton are to be thanked for doing the grunt work of delivering all this material. This is not the first time that they have tirelessly given of themselves to our community. Thank you.

I'd also like to thank Indigo which took material for those men who patronize Indigo with their women friends. Unfortunately, in our ceaseless fight against AIDS, sometimes we lose sight of other important community concerns, including lesbian and women's health issues. The solidarity Indigo gave our campaign hopefully will serve as a reminder that solidarity is to be reciprocated.

AIDS will remain with us for some time, and complacency ranks with the virus as our deadliest enemy. Preliminary statistics from a recently-completed AIDS ACTION-sponsored survey of gay men indicated an alarming number of gay men who practiced unprotected anal sex within a six-month period. One mistake can lead to a deadly infection.

We must take responsibility for our own safety, our own lives. No one else can. The bars and AIDS organizations cannot control what we do in the bedroom or anywhere else, only our own consciences and "condom sense" can do that.

During the remainder of this New Year, we hope to arrange with the bars a limited supply of condoms to be distributed to the patrons on a monthly basis. Obviously, they will not be enough for everyone. That's not the purpose. These condoms along with condom machines hopefully will remind us that there is no reason why anyone should not use a condom. The responsibility of safer sex always rests within us.

Again, thanks to all the bars and people who showed their "condom sense."

Sincerely,
Jim Brinning
Gay Male Health Educator
AIDS ACTION
Boston, Mass.

Support queer police

Dear GCN:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Preston Horton and I'm a police officer in the city of Northampton. I'm writing several gay publications looking for PR for an organization I've started for the New England area.

The organization is based upon a group that I currently belong to in New York, N.Y. It is called G.O.A.L or Gay Officers Action League. This is a support/legal representation group for professionals within the criminal justice area.

It is for gay and straight people that are police officers, correctional officers, state, local, federal district attorney's personnel. The group in New York City is called G.O.A.L Region One. I plan to incorporate GOAL New England as one chapter. I have the inc. in the works now. We all know how hard it is to be gay in this world but with a little support I've been able to come out at home and in my police dept.

Feel free to call and leave a message (413) 586-2078, or write:

G.O.A.L.
PO Box 604
Northampton, MA 01060

Sincerely,
Preston P. Horton
Northampton, Mass.

We demand respect

Dear GCN:

I pray that when this letter reaches its destination it would find the whole GCN family in the best of God's tender loving and caring.

My friends, I want to take this moment to convey my most sincere appreciation to the GCN family for placing my name in the GCN pen-pals column. Due to such a beautiful act by the GCN family, I am very fortunate to have two new friends in my life.

My friends, I want you to know that I am keeping up with the so called "gay and lesbian bashing," and I asked myself how can those people be so fucking narrow-minded? They want to beat us up because we are gay and lesbian lovers. I get so mad because I don't see any sense in this at all. Some people just don't seem to understand that we are human beings, that we have feelings like all human beings. I would like to convey my sadness to those who propagate violence against us; I want for them to understand that we are happy to be what we are, and that God gave every human being the right to be what he or she wants to be.

We are proud of being gay and lesbian.

Gay Community News is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of ten, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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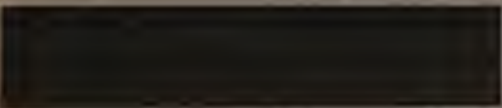
Condom sense

Dear GCN:

During the weekends of December 14, 1990 through January 5, 1991, over 40,000 condoms were distributed during the AIDS ACTION Committee's "Let Wisdom and Condom Sense Be Your Guide" campaign. Most of Greater Boston's gay bars participated in this important campaign. It was our way to end 1990 on a safe note, and to remind our community to begin the New Year in an equally safe way.

I'd like to thank those bars who helped us with this effort, with a special "thank you" to the Tavern Guild representing the bar owners and managers in our community. I'd like to thank especially Buddies and Bill Svetz from Fritz for their assistance.

During this campaign, the safer sex pamphlet "Hot Off the Streets" and the HIV-testing brochure for gay men "Think about it"



Those who are hurting and even killing us don't understand that by them doing all these savage acts against us we only become stronger in fighting for what is our human rights to be what we want to be.

We in the gay community and lesbian community don't go around hurting people because of these beliefs or because of what they choose to be. We expect to be respected as well. If you people who are causing harm upon gays and lesbians are religious fanatics or so called moralists, be what you want to be but stop your madness against us!

Well my message to the religious fanatics, to the prison bullies and to all the people who are anti-gay or anti-lesbians, we are sick and tired of your double standard bullshit, we would NOT stand still and allow anyone to hurt us in prison or out in the outside world. We don't force anybody to like us, but we sure demand respect as a community and as human beings. To those prison bullies: if you don't like gays or lesbians don't come to us trying to get a piece of ass or a blow job, leave us alone. We have feelings just like any human being. You don't have to like us, but you have to respect us as the people that we are. Don't continue to force us to do things that we don't want to do. Most important let us live our lives as we wish!!

My message to all gay men, lesbians and gay lovers is don't give up the fight, stand up for your rights! Remember we are a righteous people too!! My love to the family of *GCN* and to the gay and lesbian community around the world!

My sincere love,
Miguel Tefedo
Attica, NY 14011-0149
#88.A.2880 (B-13-2)

Making Meaker visible

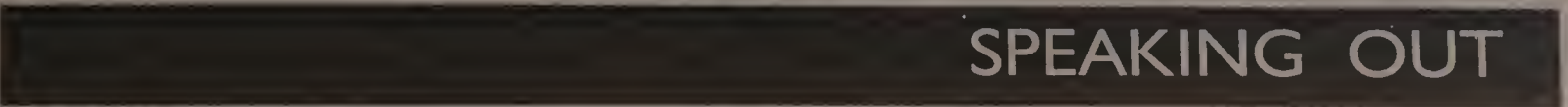
Dear *GCN*:

I was pleased to read Walta Borowski's intelligent and insightful review of Marijane Meaker's *Shockproof Sydney Skate*, which has been recently reissued as a Plume paperback after having been out of print for over a decade.

Borowski wonders why Meaker hasn't published anything else in the 17 years since this novel was published. Well, she has! Meaker currently writes novels for teenagers under the pen name of M.E. Kerr. Members of the lesbian/gay community are probably familiar with her 1986 novel *Night Kites* which was one of the first teen novels to deal with AIDS. She is, in fact, one of the best and most highly respected writers for teens. Although her novels typically deal with the concerns and love relationships of straight teenagers, she sometimes includes gays and lesbians as secondary characters. Gay adults who are accustomed to reading between the lines will frequently find gay subtexts in Kerr's novels for teens, from small details such as "coded" descriptions of characters wearing purple or pinky rings to wickedly witty social satire to overall themes of alienation and the importance of subculture.

Readers with a long memory may already know that in the 1950s Marijane Meaker also wrote under the pen names of Vin Packer (*The Evil Friendship* and *Spring Fire*) and Ann Aldrich (*We Too Must Love, We Walk Alone, Take A Lesbian to Lunch*, etc.). In real life she was the model for writer Nina Spicer, a character in Ann Bannon's Beebo Brinker novels written in the 1950s. In a memoir of her childhood and adolescence, *Me Me Me Me Me: Not a Novel* (Harper, 1983), Meaker also claims to have been the inspiration for Louise Fitzhugh's character Harriet the Spy, a marvelous role model for countless dykes growing up in the 1960s.

None of this is a secret. If one simply reads Vin Packer's "trash" thrillers, Ann Aldrich's pseudo-sociological studies of the 1950s lesbian community and M.E. Kerr's teen novels, it is quite easy to put together, since Marijane Meaker frequently recycled the same material in the books she wrote under all three pen names. The afterword of Ann Aldrich's 1958 book *We, Too, Must Love*, for example, is the basis for the plot of M.E. Kerr's 1975 novel, *Is That You, Miss Blue?* In addition, standard reference sources such as *Something About the Author* list all of Marijane Meaker's books under all of her pseudonyms. Sadly, a supposedly scholarly literary biography of M.E. Kerr published by Twayne a few years ago ignored her contributions to lesbian literature, even though *Shockproof Sydney Skate* clearly represents a transition between the writing of "Ann Aldrich" (observer of the lesbian community) and "M.E. Kerr" (young adult novelist). As lesbians, we are used to being made invisible in the mainstream and many of us choose to fight against it. I find it particularly tragic when the contributions of



Who is going to walk the plank?

By Ed Hunt

The post-election commentary in *GCN* and *Bay Windows* raises serious issues. Attacks by right-wing elements on Boston City Councillor David Scondras and on Rep. Byron Rushing (D-South End), and blatant cheerleading for Weld by sectors of the gay community concern many of us.

Under the banner of "political diversity" we now see gay (men) conservatives push their political agenda on the entire gay and lesbian community, which in both the short run and the long run serves to isolate this community from those other sectors of U.S. society with which we need to be in alliance: working people and the poor, the Black community and other communities of color, the women's movement, and others in the broader progressive movement for social and economic justice in this country.

Those who argue that we must pursue a more even-handed approach toward both major political parties, as a strategy for winning equality for gays and lesbians, are wasting their time. And ours. Dealing with the Democratic Party is bad enough; with some notable exceptions, the Democrats have been unreliable in fulfilling their smallest promises to gays or other disenfranchised groups. I share the frustration voiced by many, including those who felt it necessary to pull the lever for Weld, that the Democrats have taken us for granted.

Those of us who could neither vote for Silber nor Weld find the assertion that there is a political space for us within the Republican Party incredible. In fact, the opposite is true. The party of Ronald Reagan and George Bush offers us nothing.

It has been the Republican Party (often without opposition from most Democrats) which has pursued policies resulting in an unprecedented rise in hunger, poverty, violence, and homelessness. Civil rights laws have been weakened, and attacks on reproductive rights of women have been led by Republicans. This (Reagan-Bush) Republican administration set the political tone which has fostered an alarming rise in racist and homophobic attacks.

And it was the Republicans who led the way (again, with the complicity of many Democrats) in doing absolutely nothing to stem what has become a massive AIDS epidemic. Not surprisingly, they managed to find the resources to destabilize Nicaragua

and prop up military death squad states in Central America. (Uncle Sam has spent more than \$4 billion propping up the bloody military regime in El Salvador alone.)

Now the U.S. is at war in the Middle East as the White House leads us into the largest military action since the war in Indochina. I oppose this war, for reasons too numerous and lengthy to go into here. Weld, of course, supports U.S. intervention.

People like me might be lumped in with what has been termed "church basement liberals" (*GCN* Speaking Out 12/9/90) for withholding my support for Weld. "Church basement liberals," we are told, "hold their noses up at the prospect of supporting candidates who don't agree with every last one of their issues," and the implication is that the gay and lesbian community cannot, or should not, cast its lot with other minority groups also struggling for justice and equality. On the contrary, we're talking about a basic difference in outlook.

Just because Weld gives lip service to the concept of human rights for gays and lesbians doesn't mean we should line up politically with him as he assaults social services for working people, people of color, women, and the elderly—which he promises to do.

Weld's gay fan club needs reminding that a sizable chunk of Weld's votes were indeed STOP SILBER votes. Some observers reported on election night that Weld received more stop-Silber votes than he did pro-Weld votes. I understood the argument that Silber was dangerous and had to be stopped, even if it meant holding one's nose and voting for Weld. The argument wasn't strong enough to sway me to pull the lever for Weld, but I understood it.

It is another thing altogether to make the claim the Weld is our friend. Where is it coming from? From a small segment of the gay community acting on its class interests and not at all in the interests of the gay and lesbian community. It's more clearly seen in the controversy surrounding the State Representative race in the South End. Why else the challenge by gay Republican Mike Duffy to pro-gay, progressive Afro-American incumbent Byron Rushing.

From the beginning, Rep. Rushing has been one of our few genuine friends, and like Mel King before him, has not veered from uncompromising support of full rights for

requested that I be taken into protective custody. This was done, and here I sit.

A few days ago I was told by one of the staff members that I was going to be transferred sooner or later but that it wouldn't do me any good, because it would catch up to me sooner or later wherever I went.

I am in the process of researching case law, rulings of the courts, etc. in an attempt to force this system to recognize that there is an urgent and pressing need for measures which would insure, or at least better provide for the safety and well-being of what has long been known as a target group in prison, open to physical, mental, and verbal abuse from both staff and inmates. I am in need of support in the form of letters, either to myself or the Bureau of Prisons, in Washington D.C., or to the Warden of this prison, protesting the inadequate and draconian policies presently in effect concerning custody of gay prisoners. If you know of any legal issues, cases, etc. that apply please let me know about them.

This is not an isolated case, there are in fact quite a few of us in similar situations. I am concerned for all of us, and want to attempt to cause the system to wake up and address the problems rather than act as if no problems exist.

Your letters and phone calls regarding this subject will make them aware that there are people who care. This may cause them to stop and think before just pushing the whole issue under the rug. I can be written to (see address below) or the warden here:

Mr. Henman, Warden
U.S.P. Leavenworth
P.O. Box 1000
Leavenworth, Kansas 66048-1000

or the Director of the system:
Mr. Quinlin, Director
Bureau of Prisons
Washington, D.C.

Please help us. Thank you!

Anson Stowers
Reg. no. 18833-077
P.O. Box 1000
Leavenworth, Kansas 66048-1000

gays and lesbians, and has labored under difficult conditions for the unity of the South End's diverse population.

I commend City Councillor David Scondras for acting decisively in support of Rep. Rushing. Instead I have to question the motives of the Duffy candidacy in its desire to remove a pro-gay Black man from the state legislature when there are plenty of conservative anti-gay incumbents deserving of an electoral challenge. Perhaps s the Duffy campaign should consider a challenge to City Councillor Jim Kelly, who represents, or more appropriately, misrepresents the South End, Chinatown, (and South Boston, too, for that matter) and has based his entire political career on intolerance toward minorities.

In shoving aside the coalition of the disenfranchised that the gay and lesbian community needs to gain equality in our society, this conservative tendency in our community is also shoving aside the majority of our community, which is not exclusively white, male and middle class. Some are drooling over the prospect of high-level gay appointments at the State House by the Weld administration, and supposedly the politics of inclusion are now the order of the day. It is naïve to believe that Weld will turn his back on the traditional base of the Republican Party.

It's the gay and lesbian community, people of color, women, working people and the poor who are going to walk the plank. We are the "special interests" that the Republicans, and many Democrats, have been howling about for the past decade.

I'm glad that the right-wingers are finally out of the closet. However, this kind of political diversity the lesbian and gay community doesn't need. What's needed is a reversal of the right-wing drift this country has experienced and that some gay men have chosen to follow.

Ed Hunt, formerly a labor activist and union representative, was active in Mel King's mayoral campaigns in 1979 and 1983, is currently active in efforts against U.S. intervention in Central America and is a member of the Nicaragua Committee of the Central American Solidarity Association. Ed rode the gay and lesbian bus for the Jan. 26th march on Washington against the war in the Middle East.

Wrong and obscene

Dear *GCN*:

Once again an Illinois Department of Corrections publication review has judged homosexuality to be wrong and obscene.

With your support I was able to change the guidelines of what reading material was allowed in the last facility I was in. They went from no homosexual material, to anything but hardcore.

Now I am up against two serious homophobic fag haters. The first is Committee Chairman Mr. Jim Williamson, the second is Mr. Alan Vichtman.

They say they are not going to have any of that homosexual garbage in their prison. I say that they are wrong. I say that just like the Stonewall Rebellion 21 years ago, with unity we can win.

Anyone out there who has a few minutes and a stamp can write to the above mentioned people at P.O. Box 56, Menard, IL 62259. Show them that there are others out there who care.

Also, if you have any gay books, magazines, pamphlets or anything that they would disagree with, please send it to me at the address below.

Thank you,
Mr. Maurice D. Lewis
P.O. Box 87-N10502
Menard, Illinois 62259

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ISSUE

Would you like to contribute article, artwork or ideas for our special Black History Month Issue to be published in February? Maybe you'd like to help coordinate this *GCN* tradition and help make this year's Black History Month Issue our very best ever.

Please call Chris Wittke in Features at (617) 26-4469 to discuss ideas, or drop us a line at *GCN* Features, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116

Conference

Continued from page 1

“they groom new leaders” from within, before looking outside.

Meanwhile, he added, the actual experience of leadership poses its own problems. For example, he said, “Some people try to be overly magnanimous,” and become unable to say no to anyone.

The conference tries to alleviate or prevent such problems, said Bellinger, by describing leadership as “a process,” and not a state of being. This is true even within the structure of the conference itself, he said, where “I may be up here [in the front of the room] for this session, and then I may be in the back row in the next session.”

Exploring spirituality

A new feature of this year’s conference, Bellinger said, is the Spirituality Institute. That part of the conference, he said, is designed to make existing church practices more welcoming to lesbians and gay men, and to expand ideas about what counts as “spiritual.” This year’s spirituality program grew out of an intense church service last year that lasted for three-and-a-half hours. “People didn’t want to leave,” said Bellinger.

He added that despite many Black lesbians’ and gay men’s upbringing in the Black church, their adult sexual identification has led them to think that religious life cannot be welcoming for them. “This changes a lot of those opinions,” Bellinger said.

This is the first year that the conference has been scheduled to last for eight days — a development that Bellinger said was promising, but also a challenge. “This is definitely an experiment,” he commented, adding that although the expanded format allows for more activities, “it’s hard for people to get off work, to leave their jobs and pay for this.”

Ideally, said Bellinger, the conference’s continued growth will make it more accessible as the years go by. “Ideally, I’d like to see support and funding [from more outside sources] so more people can go at reduced rates,” he said.

—filed from Boston

Porn

Continued from page 3

workers to have freedom of speech,” he explained.

“If the judge found that the purpose of the pictures was sexual harassment, then the order was a remedy that was necessary to deal with the whole situation,” said Joseph, adding “But if the judge only was saying that any time a controversial picture goes up, it should be banned, then ACLU policy disagrees with this.”

‘Apples and oranges’

When asked about the First Amendment implications of the Robinson case, Dempsey responded, “The issues [of sexual harassment and freedom of expression rights] are like apples and oranges in the law. We’re not talking about obscenity judgements here, we’re talking about gender-based discrimination.”

Many women’s rights advocates similarly felt that First Amendment rights were not at issue in the Florida case. “The defendants voiced First Amendment concerns, and the judge dismissed them,” said Wetherfield. She added that the judge did not rule against pornography, but rather that he ruled against employers allowing sexual harassment to take place in the workplace. “The government has the right to try to eliminate sexual discrimination,” concluded Wetherfield.

Similarly, Sue Hyde, former director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Privacy Project, said that the prohibitions ordered by Melton did not relate to the censorship issues recently brought up by the Mapplethorpe case. “The display of material in the workplace is very different from the display of artwork hung in places where people choose to view it,” Hyde told GCN.

Nan Hunter, a professor at Brooklyn Law School, said that the intended purpose of the posted pictures was at issue, not their content. “The photos could be of lesbian pornography or straight women’s muscle magazines—if it is in individuals’ lockers, than it is their own business,” Hunter told GCN. “This case, however, is an issue of attempting to make the entire work atmosphere less hostile to employees.”

“The [free speech prohibition] in a court decision such as this one could be, and hopefully is, justified in terms of harassment,” she said. □

Police

Continued from page 3

that night. Eskam added that during one of his many rides in a police car, one Area C officer said, “You don’t really have any rights here.”

Although Eskam’s case is currently being investigated by Boston Police Internal Affairs, he and his advocates said they are exhausted with the process and hold little hope of any favorable outcome.

Further personal testimony illustrated how homophobia and sexism are combined when lesbians interact with police. Jen Wofford, a local activist, was arrested and detained last September for wheatpasting Queer Nation posters. Wofford and four other women were hanging posters in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

Wofford said she was spray painting the message, “AIDS Is A Disaster, Women Die Faster,” when a man pulled up in an unmarked car and said, “Come here, young woman.” The man, later identified as off-duty Officer Robinson of Area E police, did not identify himself as an officer as he approached Wofford. Not knowing that the man was a cop, Wofford refused to answer his questions and asked him to go away. Robinson then threw Wofford against his car and informed her she was under arrest. Throughout the incident, said Wofford, Robinson treated her in a patronizing and sexist manner, all the while refusing her requests to see his badge.

When police back-up arrived, Wofford said she was taken to the police station, where she was subject to further harassment and rough treatment. As a result, she suffered bruises and a mild concussion.

Wofford said that when she tried to solicit help from Sanders, she did not find the mayor’s liaison helpful. According to Wofford, Sanders reacted to the situation by saying, “What do you expect when you’re spraypainting?” (When GCN asked Sanders for a response, she said, “It’s difficult for me to respond to specific things said about me since I wasn’t there.” She added, “I would like to talk with anyone who has had a less than satisfactory experience with [this] office.”)

Steve LeBlanc of the Fenway Victim Recovery Project offered an account about the recent raid of a private S/M club. LeBlanc spoke on behalf of several people who were present at the December 1990 raid of the Thunderhead Club (see GCN Jan. 21-27, 1991). LeBlanc told the audience that during the raid, officers made anti-gay statements, such as, “Look, it’s a faggot Disneyland here,” and “You faggots, you are all gonna die of AIDS.”

Strategies discussed

Following the testimonies, participants discussed possible tactics for dealing with the police. Some ideas included: demanding the formation of a Civilian Review Board to oversee police conduct; demonstrating at the homes of police officers who have committed homophobic acts; holding additional meetings with the command staff of the police; and pursuing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for depositions from Internal Affairs investigations.

“I don’t give a damn if the police department is sensitized, unsensitized, happy or unhappy, I’m a tax payer, I expect them to act a certain way, whether they like it or not,” said openly gay Boston City Councilor David Scondras during the forum that followed the personal accounts. “If they are not capable of performing their job, they should be fired,” he said. When Scondras asked how many people in the audience had had negative experiences with police, about 70 percent of those in attendance raised their hands.

Scondras noted that he and three other city councilors have been pushing for a Civilian Review Board since 1984. “It regularly loses,” he said, adding “There’s no mystery to the obstacles, we don’t have enough votes....The police department lobbies phenomenally strongly against any civilian review board.”

“We have to be talking about coalitions,” said state Rep. Byron Rushing (D-South End). “We must be talking about long term strategies. The first thing that must be done is get commitments from the top brass,” he said, commenting, “I think that can happen this year.”

Several people drew parallels between the recent police behavior towards gay men and lesbians to the Stuart murder case. That case caused strong racial divisions in the city after police believed the white Charles Stuart’s false accusations against a Black man.

Rushing pointed out that promises made

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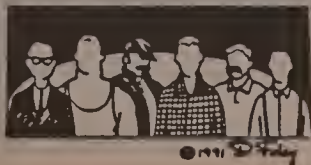
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Farewell Lavender Hearts

After six years of sharing erotic lesbian tales, storyteller Jennifer Justice brings her show to Boston for the last time.



Jennifer Justice

By Jennifer Justice

In the beginning it was like going on a blind date. We were both—me and my audience—a little shy and uncertain of what to expect. I wasn't sure anyone would respond to my invitation. But they did. Two hundred women and a few hesitant men came through the cold and snow in Cambridge, Mass., to the basement of New Words Bookstore for the first showing of *Lavender Hearts, Stories of Lesbian Romance and Erotica*. It was February, 1985.

There was a good deal of preliminary foreplay at the first performance, wooing the unknown. I had brought a large bouquet of flowers, candles and a bowl full of candy kisses and Bing cherries. And I stamped each ticket with little hearts.

You could tell by the eyes of those who'd come to the show that they were nervous. You could almost hear their questions. Would this be pornographic? Would it be silly? Stupid? Embarrassing? Any good at all? Worth the price of the ticket?

Many had brought dates. Some had come with a large group of friends, enjoying the safety in numbers. A few of the truly brave had come alone. It was difficult to get comfortable. The chairs were metal and there weren't enough of them. Blankets were spread on the floor in front of the stage. Tables ringed the area behind the chairs. Some women were left to lean against the brick wall at the very back.

"Can everyone see me?" I asked. To the audience I looked like a skittish woman with spikey blond hair. I drew a deep breath and called out, "There's more room on the floor. Here we go."

The first storytelling of *Lavender Hearts* was, in retrospect, a bit tentative. There was an almost 30-minute introduction during which I showed blown-up color xeroxes of photos of my first women lovers. I talked too much, as I do when I'm nervous.

"I call this one Mandy's lips. Look closely at the three women holding the string of licorice in their mouths. I was having affairs with all of them at the time. None of them knew about the others. I don't do that kind of thing anymore."

No one believed the last statement, of course. That was part of the fun of the whole titillating evening. Will she? Won't she? When does the erotic part begin? The room grew quite warm.

I told a creation story written by Elana Dykewomon. "The earth and sun, our mothers, lay together...for a looooooong time." Coming out was, appropriately, the topic of many of the stories at that first performance. The first moans were drawn during a story where I slowly, succulently, ate a pomegranate. Metaphorically, of course. "The sweet moisture trailed down my chin. My fingers were damp and sticky with the sap."

For me "*Lavender Hearts*" was a dialogue between myself and the audience. Storytelling is a journey the storyteller and the audience go on together. A relationship was being created. Trust was established, just in time. We finally arrived at the promised juicy parts with a story of two women kissing, licking, devouring each other under the moon and stars. "Mouth on cunts, shoulders and ears." The windows steamed up and cheers rang out. The show ended romantically with a sweet, sweet telling of the last chapter from *Patience and Sarah*.

The audience and I both went home satisfied. The concept was going to work. *Sojourner* gave the show a great review. It was, in fact, wonderful to tell and hear stories of our own special, nurturing, powerful creative erotic energy. But some people must have wondered: would it just be a one night stand? Would it happen again?

There was never any question in my mind that *Lavender Hearts* would be an annual event. I was always bold about pursuing relationships. This was one I wanted. And it wasn't just for the pleasure of being successful. Much more importantly, I wanted the relationship because it was helping to heal me. Ever since I first kissed Mandy's lips, I had been struggling to reclaim my own sexuality. To be truly womanly about sex. Not to be a victim, not to be putting myself aside. To reclaim a vision of sexuality that had nothing to do with violence or objectivity.

Each of the five subsequent *Lavender Hearts* shows dealt with that struggle, and it became quickly apparent that the women attending *Lavender Hearts* shared many similar issues. Women who were single worried that the show was only for couples and wondered if it was possible to be single and still feel sexually powerful. This was an important matter for me, believing that love is something that we each carry inside of us. I believe that relationship is simply another person responding positively, in friendship, work, or loveliness, to the love that is already alive. I do not think that love is dependent on a lover. Love is a power that belongs to us, like breathing.

During the second year of *Lavender Hearts*, Chris South sent me a story to tell in which a woman, bitter over lost love, struggles to survive. She ends up making love to herself in the pure surroundings of nature. It is one of the most beautiful and affirming stories I've ever found.

Then I found myself wondering, what about addictive love? I mean, can't this love stuff become overrated? Too central? Hence, a story on obsessive love showed up in the third year. That story humorously reflected many of the difficult lessons I'd learned about loving without addiction and the lengths to which obsessive love will drive us. In this story a woman waits all night in the

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Is lesbian and gay marriage the next logical step?

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"It may sound funny to somebody else, but I love him."

—Two men who were lovers during World War II, upon being questioned about their sexual practices, from "Report of Investigation of Homosexual Practices Amongst Military Personnel at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio," conducted by Lt. Colonel Burton Fitts, U.S. Office Air Inspector, 1945.

By Jeffery R. Nickel

At the end of last year, a gay couple in Washington D.C., asked for a marriage license. The city refused, and these men filed a lawsuit. Shockingly, the gay community did not rally to this cause. Gay people found every reason *not* to support the pair. Some attacked the men personally, questioning whether they were the "ideal" couple for this important legal test. Others claimed it wasn't the right time or place to put gay marriage in the spotlight. Still others asked whether we ought to pursue the issue at all.

Those who oppose our community charge that even the most basic civil rights for gay people will soon lead to far, far more. In Massachusetts, just prior to passage of the state's gay rights law, some warned that gay marriage would be next. This was one of the "hot button" issues of that debate. Homophobes knew it, and we knew it too. Many in the gay community were quick to assure everyone that gay marriage was not on the horizon. One community leader even tried to stop the introduction of a "domestic partnership" bill—at best a pale substitute for marriage—claiming that it would have polarized our opposition.

Are we interested in gay and lesbian marriage? Many gay people wonder if marriage even *works*. Some of us who witness marital dysfunctionality have surmised that marriage per se is dysfunctional. It's "patriarchal," we're told by some community analysts, some of whom find themselves working for the choice of gay marriage—much like lesbian/gay anti-war activists who find themselves working for inclusion in the military. For us to seek it, they claim, would merely be "patterning after heterosexuals." Would it? Those who see problems with marriage, and conclude that gay marriage is unworthy of pursuit, have drawn the wrong conclusions. For heterosexuals, marriage is an option. For us, it isn't. That's outrageous, and we ought to do something about it.

Marriage makes us nervous for another, more interesting reason. Ours is a history of being on the outside. We've thumbed our noses at society, because society has left us out. Who could blame us? We had little choice. But our choices are now increasing in number. We can begin to see the possibility of being let *into* society, though, and that prospect fills us with ambivalence.

On the one hand, that's exactly what we want—total equality. But on the other, we dread a loss of identity. If we become equal, that could mean we'd be just like everybody else. Understandably, many of us don't *want* that. Living on the periphery has given us a unique perspective on "normality," and we've found many things wrong with that. But to believe it is *all* wrong is a grave

mistake. We have been exotic for a very long time. That's how people saw us, and it's largely how we saw ourselves. But as we seek and find equality, that must change. With more freedom, we will be less different. As long as we think we're exotic, though, the world will think so also. And as long as this is the case, equality shall elude us.

Clearly there has to be *some* kind of legal recognition for gay couples. What will that be, if not marriage? We could settle for "domestic partnerships," but wouldn't that really be an admission that our relationships aren't worth as much as straight relationships? If we believe deeply, at the core of our identity, that our love possesses the same dignity and the same strength, shouldn't our love be recognized in exactly the same way? All jesting aside, we either believe that what we are is natural, or we don't. Why should we settle for anything less than what others already have? Forget domestic partnership. *Marriage*.

In 1885, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of the Americans he had encountered: "The idea of evil is inseparable in their minds from that of novelty." Even to us, gay marriage seems like a completely new issue. But it isn't. John Boswell wrote in *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* that the Christian church performed gay unions in Europe throughout the medieval period. In fact, gay "marriages" happened even before heterosexual marriages. According to Barry D. Adam's *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, in the nineteenth century, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs argued publicly for gay marriage in Germany. It's not a new idea, and it's *not* going away.

Though we're certainly not surprised to discover a conservative opposition to gay marriage, their aversion to it is curious given what they profess to detest about homosexuality. Society once gave gay people no alternative but to meet one another in public parks and bathroom stalls. There were no civil rights laws. There were no community organizations. In short, there was no *choice*. And now, the same kinds of people who made that situation possible call us "sick" and "degenerate," because some of us do some things that they don't like. Ronald Dworkin notes in *Lord Devlin and the Enforcement of Morals*, that those who argue for the condemnation of gay people force us "to choose between the miseries of frustration and persecution." That's hypocrisy.

But there could be another choice. Since many conservatives object to sex outside of marriage and they want to encourage a more "conservative" behavior, you'd think that they'd work to include us in all of the institutions of mainstream society. If we are let in, many of the symptoms of having been left out will disappear. According to their rhetoric, they should want that. They should want gay marriage.

In 1930, behaviorist J.B. Watson wrote, "The objectionable people in the world are not those who would be kings and queens but those who would deny to others the privilege of being regal." The concept of heterosexuality as universal destiny is appealing in a world where everything seems to be under constant challenge. The idea of the traditional man-and-wife relationship, and only that relationship, is a quaint notion. But these theories aren't really for everyone. And moreover, they're extremely costly to

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Lavender

Continued from page 7

back seat of a 1972 Volkswagon for her non-monogamous lover to come home. "Ah, if only...!" Laughing at the pain seemed to help a lot. The audiences roared. The stories continued to develop in response to our shared concerns when I received feedback from women wanting stories that reflected our diversity in size. I responded with an honest story of my love for larger women.

And the audiences kept coming, in greater and greater numbers. By the third year we moved out of the basement at New Words and into the hall at the First Church Congregational in Harvard Square. The audience size doubled. And they were getting bolder too. That same year we made a live cassette recording of the show. In the background of the second track after the eating of the pomegranate a woman calls out "I'm hungry!" I love an audience that talks back! In later years, *Lavender Hearts* has often been stopped by the response of some wild woman who just can't contain her whoop or moan. Now, *that's* community!

Also in that third year, photographer Susan Wilson joined the show. She added an exquisite fifteen-minute slide show of erotic images of women. *GOINFO* magazine in Toronto called it "brilliant... erotic... stunning."

The slide show became part of the relationship, responding to the thoughts and needs of the audience. By the second slide show, it was affirming our diversity of sizes, shapes, colors, ages and physical abilities. The slides are a perfect match for the stories, drawing as much laughter as erotic moaning.

Throughout the year the largest question continued to be, "Can you be sexual in our world without being pornographic?" It wasn't only a problem for the show in Boston. We began touring *Lavender Hearts* in 1987. It traveled to Ontario, Toronto, the National Women's Music Festival in Indianapolis, North Carolina, and, of course, Provincetown. Everywhere we went the issue arose. "What do you mean 'erotic?'" "Can we put it on our flyers?" Imagine the surprise of the audience who were invited to a show simply described as being about "lesbian romance."

Surprisingly, as recently as three years ago in Provincetown there was concern about encouraging sexuality in the age of AIDS. The question was asked again, "How can a slide show be anything but pornographic?"

These repeating questions served to strengthen my conviction that we have been robbed of a very real strength. First, as women, we were told we were dirty if we were sexual. We were told we should just lie back and let it be done to us, but do not enjoy it. "Don't ever initiate it, you are the willing victim." Simultaneously we—and here I am clearly a child of the '60s—were told we were frigid if we wouldn't lie down for anyone who asked. We were asked to strike that impossible balance between being innocents and whores. We still are if movies or television are any indication. How many of us like *Pretty Woman*? Julia Roberts had to be a hero and a redeemer on top of all the rest.

So it came as no surprise really that women were confused. How can the erotic not be pornographic, i.e., objectified, violent, degrading? Is there a point of holding back on our sexuality when so many gay men have died? Can we all claim a positive sexuality in the face of so many obstacles?

But the fact is we do have the right. We all do. "Orgasm," as I heard a woman say in an ashram once, "is the closest thing to God on the physical plane." And if God, bless her heart, is willing, I will one day love myself through to a place where sexual energy does exist without violence, coercion or guilt. *Lavender Hearts* has been a powerful force in that change.

At the end of the third year of creating *Lavender Hearts* for Boston audiences, I finally admitted to myself that I was an incest survivor. For the fourth *Lavender Hearts* I created a story about it. In retrospect it makes sense that *Lavender Hearts* has been my way of regaining power over being sexual, a power that was both assigned me by my abusers, and belittled in me by those same abusers.

Telling that story in front of 400 women was probably one of the most difficult choices I'd made in a long time. But who could I trust more than those women who had been joining me in this quest for fun, lust and celebration for four years? They were great. I felt as if their support lifted me from the room and over my own personal mountain. The other side of that mountain is wholeness.

An added, and unexpected, result of telling my incest story was having friends share their own stories with me. Sometimes they gave me a hug and a knowing nod to

acknowledge what we shared in common. Sometimes they wrote a letter. But I became ferociously aware that I was not alone.

I was not alone in pain, not alone in joy, and not alone in my willingness to go through the abuse which we are all bombarded with daily. I also learned that I was not alone in my determination to reclaim and nurture my powerful, spiritual, physical, sexual self.

For *Lavender Hearts*, a big part of the answer was the Victorian erotica story sent to me by a friend in Texas. It's a four-orgasm story, tender and hilarious, that took *Lavender Hearts* to a whole new level of wild abandon.

And there it remains. This will be the sixth and final year for *Lavender Hearts* in Boston. The healing that this relationship was reaching for me has been fulfilled. It's time for me to move onto other areas of creation, time to discover where the journey will take me now.

This year we will be moving to the larger hall, the place with the altar, in the First Congregational Church. That way no one will be turned away at the door. There will be flowers, candles, and a bowl with Bing cherries and candy kisses, and we will of course, end with a dance. Storytelling is a two-way street, an act of community. And we want to be sure the community has the chance to act back.

So finally, I want to thank everyone in my audience for going on this journey with me. I thank them for keeping me company, adding their visions, supporting our growing into love. It's been a great relationship.

A word of warning about the last Boston production of *Lavender Hearts*. You know how we always come to the place in the show where I say, "Fasten your seat belts for this one. It's a four-orgasm story." Well, for this last show, I no longer feel timid about sexuality. Fasten your seat belts coming in the door. It's going to be an exhilarating ride! □

The final Boston celebration will be held Saturday, Feb. 16 at First Church Congregational, corner of Garden and Mason Sts., Harvard Square in Cambridge, Mass. Shows are at 6 and 8 p.m. Dance at 10 p.m. for all ticket holders. Tix: \$12 at door; \$10 in advance; available at New Words Bookstore, Cambridge; Glad Day Bookstore, Boston; Red Book, Jamaica Plain; and Recovering Hearts, Provincetown.

Marriage

Continued from page 8

the people they leave out.

Before even talking about gay marriage, it's important to first talk about *marriage*. Why does it exist? What does it have to do with sexuality, if anything? Religion as well as law support it, in part because it's a good structure in which to raise children. But the reason why individuals get married is far more personal than that. People desire companionship; they want someone to spend their lives with. They may have children, or they may not. But even if they don't, the legal recognition of their relationship does not diminish. And neither does the measure of their love.

We do have a choice. We can look upon human love and tenderness as innately suspect, or we can look upon them as fundamentally beautiful and extraordinary as things that make us fully human. Not long ago, it was a radical idea that "sexuality"—a brand new word—might be allowed to "merely" bring pleasure to our lives. Sexuality was no longer just procreation. But neither was it merely recreation. It was identity. It had a meaning all its own.

And it did not confine itself to the private sphere. We know, that for better or worse, what is "private" has been made public. Perhaps that shouldn't be; but it is, and therefore it's simply not responsible to ask gay people to keep their sexuality behind bedroom blinds, while others flaunt theirs on national television.

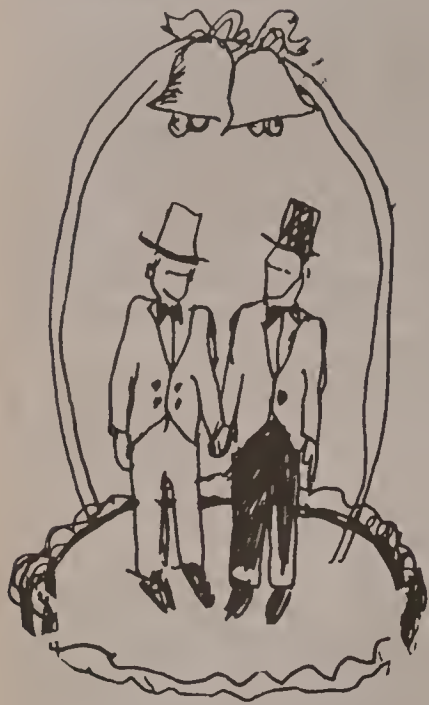
The opponents of gay rights dread the coming of a world in which love knows no shame, while we, of course, pray for it. But their hopes are based on assumptions that were never true. They would be surprised to discover that we're all actually fighting for the same thing; that is, the sacredness of human love. The trouble is, they have almost every one of their facts totally and desperately wrong. Those who would lecture us on the "immorality" of our lives don't know the first thing about how we actually live them.

After all of the moral, theological, psychological, and political discussions about homosexuality have been exhausted, the debate comes down to this: We either

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Marriage

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love—with the same intensity and the same commitment—or we do not. It's that simple. Often, our love gets no support from anyone. Yet somehow, it goes on. When we see two men or women holding hands, we have proof that it happens. And we have proof that it *should*. Men ought to love other men, and women ought to love other women. Even if it didn't happen, it should happen. And indeed, it does happen. Those who don't believe that gay people love don't merely have another "perspective" on homosexuality, they're wrong.

Jerry Falwell snidely remarked: "The love that once dared not speak its name now will not shut its mouth." He was right. And that is as it should be, because this is our country too. It isn't just Jerry Falwell's country, or Jesse Helms' country. This is *our* country.

The historian Louis Hartz wrote: "The Negro demands today full and immediate equality, and given the inclusionist logic, that demand can encounter no challenge. For there is, in the liberal ethic, no provision for a 'waiting period' for humanity." *That demand can encounter no challenge.* We must win. Gay marriage *must* happen in America, because full civil rights for gay people can mean no less. America *cannot* deny that to us, because America is equality.

I once asked an older friend of mine what it was like for him, growing up gay in the early 1950s. He answered, "We just didn't. We just weren't. We just couldn't. Because it just wasn't. There was no question. There were no choices. There was no chance. Things are different now. We have a chance to get everything coming to us. But we at least have to ask. When people accuse us of wanting far more than the most basic civil rights, tell them they're damn right we do. If we don't talk about gay marriage, people will suspect that we don't think ourselves worthy of it. And well they should."

In *Giovanni's Room*, by James Baldwin, Jacques declares to David:

Love him. Love him, and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters? And how long, at best, can it last? since you are both men and still have everywhere to go? Only in five minutes, I assure you, only five minutes, *hélas!* in the dark. And if you think of them as dirty, then they *will* be dirty—they will be dirty because you will be giving nothing, you will be despising your flesh and his. But you can make your time together anything but dirty; you can give each other something which will make both of you better—forever—if you will *not* be ashamed, if you will only *not* play it safe.

We must stop playing it safe. We must have no doubt. In a recent *Newsweek* article called "The 21st Century," six-year-old Jacob had no doubt. When he was asked by his teacher to bring his parents into school, so that the entire class might get to know them, he brought in two men. "That's my dad," he said, "and *that's* my dad's husband." He knew no other word for it, because there really is no other word. He had no doubt that these men loved each other. He had no doubt that these men were *married*. And well they would have been, if only the state had said "yes." Eventually, the state will say "yes." But "eventually" is too long to wait. Let's make them say it *now*. □

Queer

Continued from backpage

happiest of my life. I continued to live a schizoid existence—working as a schoolteacher, molding myself into what I

imagined was a traditional male image, concentrating on developing my intellect, my speaking skills, my ability to organize—but I couldn't fool myself. I was a queer in lumberjack drag. I'd stand around bars with 500 guys in flannel shirts and bluejeans, all of us drinking Budweiser in a can, and feel totally out-of-it. My queer sense was still holding the reins.

And then the Gay Rights Movement took over and I watched a new generation of homos coming down the assembly line.

The Anita Bryant and John Briggs madness of the late '70s brought a bumper crop of new activists onto the scene who were different than the Gay Lib queers. The Gay Lib queers were out because they didn't really have much choice; to the general population, these folks had queer written all over them. The new Gay Rights types seemed to fit into society easier than the veteran queers. They were men who looked like men and women who looked straight to me. Some of these new men had been athletes in high school; some were successful and high-powered professionals. These Gay Rights types somehow had a way to make it in mainstream America.

Now I loved these new kids on the block because, even if they didn't look the part, they seemed to identify with queerness to some extent. What I didn't see then that I see now is that many of these people did feel odd, but in one area only; they felt different from the rest of the world because they felt erotic attraction for people of their same sex. Often *this alone* identified them as queer. My queerness coincided with theirs but also bled into other huge areas of my personal identity. I was queer because I was a homo, but also because I was a sissy, and a Jew, and a kid with a twisted class background, and an adult with intense kinky desires. My queerness ran deep to the core of several essential components of who I was.

I don't want to get into judgments about which kinds of queers are superior and which kind aren't really queers. These days I tend to attempt to embrace all of us weirdos and try not to set up a hierarchy of queerdome. But I must say that these different levels of alienation brought about conflicts in the lesbian and gay movement that divided us deeply. The politics of Gay Liberation and Women's Liberation and the Lesbian Nation were about feeling good about *who we were* as outlaws in American culture. Our discussions focused on bringing down a system that hurt us deeply. We didn't want a piece of the American pie, we wanted to start at the beginning and change the entire recipe.

These new queers saw things a little differently. They wanted to make America safe for homos. They became architects for a political agenda defined by the narrow boundaries of their queerness; discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. They wanted to elect lesbians and gay men to public office. They pushed for laws that gave homosexuals the same rights as heterosexuals. They fought to make the American Psychiatric Association stop labeling homosexuality a mental illness.

All this was well and good. I embraced the new mainstream movement, but the queerness still lurked in my heart. I'd put on suits and join the others lobbying in Sate House offices, but every time I'd hear a gay rights lobbyist say "We're just like everyone else," my queer soul would scream out inside me. Every time I'd see the faggy men and dykey women shunted to less visible positions in the movement, my queer soul would shout in my ear. Every time I witnessed a Gay Rights gang smirk at the expense of transvestites or leather people or bisexuals or hustlers or whores or sex pigs, my queer soul would stomp around inside me, kicking at the sides of my stomach.

Survival techniques for queers in the age of acceptance

Sometimes I wonder how I got through those years when the movement seemed almost acceptable to liberal America. I'd read articles in *Newsweek* about respectable queer types and I'd hunger for the full truth. I wanted articles about gay public officials to include lines like, "As a child, he always put on his mother's clothing." or "After they send their children off to school, this lesbian couple goes down to the basement where an elaborate dungeon provides them with an hour of amusement before going off to their respective law firms."

Most of the tensions that arose in the lesbian and gay community during this time were based in different levels of queer alienation among different populations of people in the movement. Queers who felt multiple forms of oppression couldn't understand the tendency of the Gay Rights Movement to focus solely on sexual orientation discrimination: what about race, gender, ability, age, religion and class?

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Gay and Lesbian

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Queer

Continued from page 10

Those of us who lived in multiple categories of queerness couldn't understand how things could be discretely separated. After all, queerness is queerness, regardless of the source of the alienation.

Two techniques taught to me by queer mentors allowed me to survive as an activist in an increasingly mainstreamed community. First, I learned that there was a critical difference between giving away my integrity and finding ways to get by in the world. The latter was acceptable only as long as the former didn't occur. I could work as a director of a gay community center, but I couldn't be in a position of banning transsexuals from the building. I could head up a gay political group, but I had to be sure to ask candidates for mayor what their position would be on public sex spaces. I'd be the first to admit I wasn't always successful here, but, over time, I developed the ability to remember which side I truly was on and keep my queer soul intact.

The second survival technique I embraced was based on the awareness that, just as the movement became more mainstreamed, it would become harder and harder to find a place where I could be all of who I was and not get shit for it. I had to accept second best—compartmentalizing my queerness and getting it validated in different settings. This involved bringing the queer Jew in me to the gay synagogue; the anarchist in me attended a queer anarchist discussion group; the kinky queer found a home in leatherbars and sex clubs. So even though I'd have to check part of my queerness at the door, I'd generally go away somewhat happy and with the dream that someday, somehow, it would all come together again.

Coming home to Queertown, U.S.A.

My queer heart sang with joy when I heard about Queer Nation. My heart had managed to survive Gay Rights and the years of compartmentalization and 10 years of AIDS. The time had arrived now when I could come home.

I imagined Queer Nation as a collection of bizarros who celebrated every outlawed characteristic in our one nation under Helms. I imagined nose rings and strutters and opinionated students and men in lipstick. Sounded like my kind of crowd.

My first meeting confirmed my fantasies. The room was filled with kindred spirits. A general social awkwardness suffused the room. There was passion and ideals and conflict and rage. I couldn't identify with some of the things stirred up in that room. "Read my queer lips," I overheard one queen say to another.

My attendance at a few meetings and my observations of queer politics and culture not surprisingly brought me to a place familiar to all of us queers: mixed feelings, contentiousness and alienation. When I first recognized these feelings surrounding Queer Nation, I had to smirk a bit. I'd once said that even in a room filled with Jewish gay men who were sober, kinky and born in New York, I'd find myself feeling at odds with all the others in short time. So there I was in a sea of queers, feeling like a fish out of water.

It took me a while to pinpoint the source of my emerging discomfort. Why was I feeling at odds among oddballs? The answers first came to me on rereading the "Statement of Purpose" of Queer Nation/San Francisco.

I found contradiction between being "unapologetic about who and what we are" and "redefining 'queer' positively in an effort to promote homosexuality or 'queerness' and combat the offensive and negative stereotypes and images that have been used to oppress us." I wondered which of these stereotypes are actually characteristics I value in myself and my pals. I wonder what we're going to be asked to give up to promote homosexuality positively.

I finally understood my increasing sense of conflict when I realized that a key tenet of Queer Nation is "We demand the same rights and privileges that the heterosexual population of this country enjoys," and when I see activists putting this into action. I understand Gay Rights folks embracing homosexual marriage or queers in the military, but Queer Nation?

See, I don't believe that queerdome is at root about homosexuality or lesbianism. There are many gay people who don't identify as queer and who honestly are not queer. They're what I call "normies" who are attracted to others of their same sex. They lack some of the basic feelings essential to my definition of queer. They're neither alienated nor at odds with the world. Instead, they fit in. It seems remarkable to me, but it's true.

And there are non-homosexuals who I believe are among the queerer queers. Certainly many bisexuals share in the experience of queerness—most aren't allowed to fit in anywhere, either among homos or heteros. But I know a number of straight queers: a married couple heavily into S/M roles (she as the mistress and he as her servant), a working-class dyslexic prostitute I met in a coffee shop, a Palestinian dwarf I came to know when lived in Los Angeles. Not only did these folks share the baseline queer sense of always being a weirdo, but they embraced queer politics and aesthetics. They were at peace with their queerness—free from defensiveness or shame.

So where does this leave me? At odds with the organized queer world, perhaps, but as usual I don't take my alienation or objections too seriously.

Sometimes I think it just comes down to the fact that I like the oddballs of the world. Even though life among the queers isn't a place of total comfort and ease, it's the closest thing I expect to find that feels like home. When you've always seen the world through a twisted maze of distortions, Queer Nation looks like a place worth visiting. □

*Eric Rofes lives in San Francisco.
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Police

Continued from page 6

by the police command do not always translate into behavioral changes by the experience in the Stuart case that there are times that the command staff is not in control of what is going on," he said.

"Training is essential," said Rushing. "We're talking about the second highest group of wife-beaters in the country, policemen—after professional athletes. We need to let all of the criminal justice officials in the state know that this is going on and this community is on the verge of taking this to the streets."

FOI requests filed

On Friday, Feb. 1, the Alliance mailed a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to Boston Police Commissioner Francis Roache seeking detailed records about "departmental investigations and disciplinary actions taken in any case involving allegations of homophobic misconduct by the police." The Alliance also requested overall statistics and regulations concerning the process of Police Internal Affairs investigations and information about deposition of complaints against the police by various groups.

Cronin, the official filer of the FOI request, said the Alliance saw an urgent need to assess the process of Internal Affairs as a means of redress. "We have a responsibility both to victims of reported misconduct, and the Department's command staff, who assure us Internal Affairs is adequate, to look closely at its track record in handling the complaints of lesbians, gays, and other minorities," said Cronin.

French Wall, editor of the *Guide*, has also filed an FOI request. Wall's FOI request seeks records more specific to the Thunderhead Club raid. Wall said he is also asking for information about the number of violent crimes reported that night, "to determine whether the police had anything better to do that night other than interrupting people's private sexual enjoyment."

Massachusetts law requires that the city's police respond to both requests within 10 days of their receipt. □

PSAs

Continued from page 3

concentrate on "safe" issues that carry general messages.

Many groups told *GCN* that while they created commercials to advertise their own organizations, they rely on ads by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to provide more general AIDS education information. The CDC has promoted a national AIDS information campaign since 1987. As a federal health organization, however, the CDC is especially wary of creating controversy that might alienate television networks and viewers.

A CDC spokesperson, Melissa Shepard, told *GCN* that although the agency puts out some "pretty mainstream messages," it has to make sure that the ads don't backfire by "bringing out negative responses or reinforcing stereotypes." Shepard added that the CDC public education program is funded by the U.S. Congress, and that Congress wants "the money to be spent on the general population," not specific target groups.

In Boston, Richard acknowledged that the Living Center's ads may not reach all the disenfranchised groups that might need help, but, he concluded, "The ads are focused, and, I believe, effective." □

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Do you need facts about menopause? Does the stereotyping of older women make you angry? Do you want to be part of an Older Feminists Network? Broomstick, a bimonthly national magazine by, for and about women over forty. Annual subs (US funds only) U.S. \$15, Canada \$20, Overseas and Institutions \$25. Sliding scale available. Sample copy \$3.50. 3543 18 St. 33, San Francisco, CA 94110.

LESBIAN CONTRADICTION

A Journal of Irreverent Feminism. Quarterly of commentary, analysis, reviews, cartoons & humor by and for women who agree to disagree-who are still political, but not necessarily correct. Sample \$1.50sub. \$6 more if/less if. LesCon, 584 Castro, No. 236G, SF, CA 94114. (18.35)

VACATIONS

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Beautiful fireplaced rooms with hardwood floors, and color T.V.'s. Wonderful fireplaced cottages available. Included are daily maid service, parking, and delicious gourmet breakfasts. Five minute walk to town center, one block from ocean. Off season rates from March 29- May 23. Bradford Gardens Inn, 178 Bradford St. Provincetown, MA 02657 (508) 487-1616 (38)

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Rustic cozy inn one half block from Provincetown harbor, free continental breakfast, parking, most rooms w/private bath OPEN YEAR ROUND. 7 Winthrop Street Provincetown, MA 02657. (508) 487-0094. TJ

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Destinations and cruises USA/ Worldwide. Plus! Super low packages to Ford lauderdale, Miami Beach, Key West, Disneyworld/Epcot.. Riverwalk Travel (800) 771-1777 (32)

PRISONERS SEEKING FRIENDS

POETS AND ARTISTS!!

GCN PRINTS A PAGE OF POETRY AND DRAWINGS EACH SUMMER/FALL. IF YOU'D LIKE TO SUBMIT SOMETHING, PLEASE DO. EVERYTHING WON'T GET IN BUT MUCH WILL. PLEASE SEND YOUR WORK TO GCN, PRISONER PROJECT, 62 BERKELEY ST, BOSTON MA 02116

GM 33 Intelligent, sincere wishing long term penpals. Michael HAMMONS 490203, CLU, 6th, 2800 Gravier, New Orleans LA 70119

Seeking friendship with young gay male. Prisoners welcome. Will share Montana home when out in the fall. (Jason, Derek, Billy, Please write!) Richard WICK, 27975, 700 Conley Lake Rd, Deer Lodge MT 59722

Italian 30 looking to meet people of interest. Fairly intelligent but always eager to learn more. Craig FORNARO, 557754, Box 16, Lovelady TX 75851.

I am a serious Poet and artist, seeking friendship and possible romance with someone aged 18-25. Can't write other prisoners. Deva BLUEWING, 104228, Box 1000, Craigsville VA 24430

Lonely GM 35 seeks correspondence with other gay men. I like to crochet, bowl, play pool, cards and boardgames. Also like country music. Can write other prisoners. Dee J. McCLURE, 45626, Box 1568, Hutchinson KS 67504

Lonely feminine prisoner needs a penpal. Jerry Lynn BORING, 75465, KSR, LaGrange KY 40032.

I'm technically a bi male, but quite effeminate and tend to be gay. I was going to have the operation but it's too late now. Gawd, I sure am horny. Hoping to meet someone to write. D. HACKETT, 147593, Box 779k, Marquette MI 49855

I used to be a nomad and consequently am now alone. I love people and would like to write someone. Robert BANKS, 531176, Rt 4 Box 1200, Rosharon TX 77583

Looking for some conversation with some effeminate men who are willing to share intellectual thoughts and possibly more. Miguel BIETH, 89A 6252, Box 51, Comstock NY 12821

33, blond and blue, and wishing to write whoever will write me. Douglas Lee TANNER, C-47983, Box 690, Soledad, CA 93960.

I am looking for someone that loves to fuck very hard and that likes 69 and french kissing. Peter GINGRAS, Box 14, Concord NH 03301

Is there anyone out there that will befriend a lonely homosexual transvestite? Looking for an older man to come home to. Can't write prisoners. Richard HALL, 185-949, 1576 W. Bluewater Hwy, Ionia MI 48846

I'm a very sincere, financially stable, bi-male, former nude dancer seeking correspondence/relationship. Fadjo JOHNSON, 39671, Box 2500, Lincoln NE 68502

I haven't seen the GCN for a long time. Do you still do the penpal program? I am SO LONELY! I hope you do and someone out there does and we can become penpals. Richard HAFF, 491736, Box 16, Lovelady TX 75851.

ORGANIZATIONS

BOSTON ALLIANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH

Social support group for youth 22 and under. Wed. night general meeting from 7:30-9pm. New persons meeting at 6:00. Women's meeting at 6:45. Call 1-800-42-BAGLY for info.(15.32)

OLDER-LESBIAN ENERGY

Social and support group for women over 40. P.O. Box 1214, East Arlington, MA 02174.(15.48)

BLACK AND WHITE MEN TOGETHER

Multiracial group for all people. Call (415) 431-1976 or write BWMT, suite 140, 584 Castro St. SF, CA, 94114. (16.1)

MAN/BOY LOVE

Intergenerational Love Support Group. World wide news, art, opinions. Application, information free. Bulletin \$1.00 NAMBLA, P.O. Box 174, New York, NY 10018(7)

"TO ALL THOSE IN AND OUT OF PRISON, WHO FIGHT AGAINST THEIR BONDAGE"

Alexander Berkman,

Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist

Women Seeking Friends



Lesbian 30 Sun Cancer, Moon Aries, Rising Virgo, metaphysician (Chinese Ox) Artist who loves cats and music. Would like to hear from people especially in remonte or interesting places. Foreigners welcome. Ramona BARRY, N-7139 Cty Hwy K, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

I'm looking for friends from all over the world, preferably gay women. My interests range fom martial arts to impersonating Prince. Sorry I cannot correspond with other prisoners. Regina BYRDSONG, A160566, Box 8540 (#234), Pembroke Pines FL 33024



I was referred to you by Rock Thatcher of NAMBLA, and would like to find someone who would like to be my penpal. Joseph CUNNINGHAM, D-61239, Box 29, Represa CA 95671.

LOOKING FOR A PENPAL. Please write!!

* Dennis WYNN, 126809, Box E, Jackson MI 49204

* R. A. MURPHY, 184-674, 1576 W. Bluewater Hwy, Ionia MI 48846

* James Royalty WILLIAMS, 89B 0390, Box 51, Comstock NY 12821

* William MORRIS, 619690, RD 1 Box 700, Georgetown DE 19947

* Todd HESS, D-71975, Box W, 1/c3/21, Represa CA 95671.

* Wesley DAVIS, 89A 5816, Box 51, Comstock NY 12821

* James BUELL, D-76356, D-2-108, Box 7500, Crescent City CA 95532

* Marco VIDAL, Box 208, Indian Springs NV 89070

* Donnie JAMES, Box 215, Maury NC 28554

* Ernest CRAWLEY, D-01129, 4A2R, Box 3461, Corcoran CA 93212

* Robert WESOLOWSKI, 90B 1670, Box 367-B, Dannemora NY 12929

* Jerome CAMPBELL, 211228, Box 45699, Lucasville OH 45699

* William WALKUP, EF-203608, Star Rt, Reidsville GA 30499

* Louis CARILLO, 418183, Rt 1 Box 150, Tennessee Colony TX 75884

* Greg THOMAS, Box 85 P#1076, Loxahatchee FL 33470.

* Michael MATSON, 98998, 7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd, Unit 2-B-104, Nashville TN 37243

* C. JACKSON, 116902, C-107, Box 500, Olustee FL 32072

* A. Gene STOWERS, 18833-077, Box 1000, Leavenworth KS 66048

* Chris CONLEY, 60636, Box 1010, Canon City CO 81215

* Robert FOWLER, 79A 4178, Box 338, Napanoch NY 12458.

* Bobby THOMPSON, 532091, Box 16, Lovelady TX 75851.

* Jim Bo EVERSOLE, 103908, 3001 W Hwy 146, LaGrange KY 40032.

* Dave BEIDLER, 67043, Gila 1450, Box 5003, Douglas AZ 85608

*

CALENDAR

9 Saturday, Cambridge ♦ "Valentine Dance,"
Sponsored by Harvard-Radcliffe's Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay Alliance. Dunster House. Everyone welcome. 9pm-1am. \$3,\$4, \$5. For more info: 495-5476.

Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos encouraged. Please specify if event is or is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted. Please use our format as a guide for listings. All listings must be typed. Please note that listings are printed only as space allows; we regret that we cannot print every submission. No phone calls, please!

9 SATURDAY

Cambridge ♦ "Valentine Dance." Harvard-Radcliffe's Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay Alliance. Dunster House. Everyone welcome. 9pm-1am. \$3,\$4, \$5. For more info: 495-5476.

Boston ♦ AIDS Mastery Workshop. Northern Lights Alternatives. 423-3035.

Boston ♦ FCHC Living Well Series: "Massage for Women." 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 338 Newbury St., Rm. 203. \$5. Register 267-0900.

Provincetown ♦ P'town Positive / PWA Coalition Singles Tea. Second Saturday each month. 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. St. Mary's of the Harbor.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbian Singles' Night. DOB. 7 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

Jamaica Plain ♦ L/G Contra/Square Dancing. Smoke-drug-free. 8 to 11 p.m.; beginners' lessons 7:30 p.m. First Church of J.P., corner Centre and Eliot Sts. \$5. Info and directions: Janet 522-2216, Phil 729-9206, or Scott 536-2014.

Cambridge ♦ Tricia Langlois. 9 p.m. Christopher's, 1920 Mass. Ave., Porter Sq. \$6. 876-9180.

10 SUNDAY

Boston ♦ AIDS Mastery Workshop. Northern Lights Alternatives. 423-3035.

Boston ♦ Dykes' Dialogue: Living Arrangements. 4 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. Info 247-2927.

11 MONDAY

Boston ♦ Plan the Pasty: Bifest 1991. 6 to 8 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. Info: BisMove 247-6683.

Cambridge ♦ DOB Monthly Business Mtg. 8 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

12 TUESDAY

Boston ♦ Boston Professional Ass'n. 6 p.m. cocktails, 7:30 p.m. buffet dinner. Tremont House, Tremont St. (across from Wang Ctr.). \$15.

Boston ♦ FCHC Living Well Series: "An Intro to Meditation." 6 to 8 p.m. 338 Newbury St., Rm. 203. 267-0900.

Boston ♦ The Local Impact of the Gulf War. Presented by Harvard School of Public Health, Rm 213. 677 Huntington Ave. 12:30pm.

Boston ♦ Boston Coalition for Black L/G's. Second Tuesday each month. Harriet Tubman House, 566 Columbus Ave. (Mass. Ave. & Columbus). 6:30 p.m. Info: David 424-6989.

Boston ♦ Lincoln's Birthday Carnival. Byron Rushing Coalition, etc. invite you. 7 p.m. 791 Tremont St. \$25 donation. 266-7754.

Arlington ♦ Parents and Friends of L/G's. Second Tuesday each month at First Parish Unitarian Church, 630 Mass. Ave. 7:15 p.m. Info: 547-2440 or (508) 562-5807.

13 WEDNESDAY

Boston ♦ Mass. G/L Political Caucus Monthly Membership Mtg. 6:30 p.m. Arlington Street Church (use the Boylston St. entrance).

Boston ♦ Time for Reflection and Prayer During Lent. MCC. 7 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. 427-0420.

Boston ♦ Coming Out Support Group. The Center, 338 Newbury St. Second and fourth Wednesday each month. 8 p.m. Info: 247-2927.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbians 35+ Discuss "Romance?!!!" DOB. 8 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

14 THURSDAY

Dorchester ♦ Dorchester GALA Monthly Bizzness Mtg. 7:30 p.m. Info: Hotline 825-3737 or Barry 288-1847.

Dorchester ♦ G/L Concerns Committee of SEIU Local 509. Second Thursday each month. Union office, 5 Howard Johnson Plaza. 6:30 p.m. Info: 282-2509.

Boston ♦ FCHC Living Well HIV Medical Forum: "AZT and Beyond." 7 to 9 p.m. BLC, 140 Clarendon St., 7th flr. Moderated by LeBaron Moseby, CRU-NE.

Cambridge ♦ DOB Coffee Night and Valentine Party. 7 to 9:30 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. Bring \$1 and food to share (no reheating facil.). 661-3633.

Boston ♦ GLAAD: Boston Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. General meeting second Thursday

each month. The Center rm. 202, 338 Newbury St. 8 p.m. Info: 492-4639.

15 Friday

Cambridge ♦ "Scenes From The Trojan Women" (a one-man show). 8 p.m. See entry 2/16.

Cambridge ♦ Open Discussion for Lesbians. DOB. 8 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

Boston ♦ Friday Night at the Movies: "West Side Story." 8:05 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St., rm. 203. \$2.

16 SATURDAY

Boston ♦ "How To Date a Man, Part I." 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 4th flr. AAC, 131 Clarendon. Free. Registration: 437-6200 *499.

Shrewsbury ♦ Valentine's Day Dance. Clark University's Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay Alliance. LWVO. VJ/DJ, wet bar, etc. 8pm-1am. 18+. \$4, \$2. For more info and directions (508) 793-7287.

Boston ♦ "Once Upon Our Time": Multicultural Story Hour for Children (3-8) of G/L Parents and Friends. Third Saturday each month. J.P. Library, 12 Sedgwick St. 10 to 11:15 a.m. Limited space. Sign up: Marian or Jenifer 267-0900.

Boston ♦ Men of All Colors Together. 10th Annual Multi-colored Heart Gala. 195 W. Newton St. \$8. Free food, cash bar 9pm-2am. All welcome. For info: 266-4378.

Boston ♦ Lesbian Fun and Games. Smoke and alcohol-free. 338 Newbury St. 7 to 10 p.m. Third Saturday each month. \$2 donation.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbian Singles' Night. DOB. 7 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

Cambridge ♦ "Scenes From The Trojan Women" (a one-man show). A work-in-progress by Eric Ronis. Part of the series "Shaking Up Shakespeare." 8 p.m. 2/15, 16, 17. Adams House Kronauer Space, Harvard U (use "G" entry on Bow St. between Linden and Plympton Sts.). Tickets \$5, \$3 students, at door only.

17 SUNDAY

Boston ♦ Cut It Up on Newbury Street: A Cutathon for Hair Cares. Newbury Street's chic-est salons unite. Each Cutathon haircut from 12 to 5 p.m. is a \$15 donation to Hair Cares, an organization which distributes funds directly to beauty professionals suffering from AIDS. 267-7961.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbian Writers' Workshop. DOB. 1 to 3 p.m. Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. \$1. 661-3633.

Boston ♦ Dykes' Dialogue: Coming Out at Work. 4 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. Info 247-2927.

Cambridge ♦ Benefit Concert for N.E. Women's Musical Retreat. Many performers. ASL interpreted. 4 to 8 p.m. Indigo, 823 Main St. 497-7200.

Cambridge ♦ "Scenes From The Trojan Women" (a one-man show). 8 p.m. See entry 2/16.

18 MONDAY

Boston ♦ Orientation to AAC Supports and Services. 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. BLC Library, YWCA, 150 Clarendon. Sign up: 437-6200 x328.

Hanover, NH ♦ Panelmaking Workshops for the AIDS Memorial Quilt. First and third Mondays each month. Lutheran Church, 5 Summer St. 7 p.m. Info: Thom (603) 632-4145.

Boston ♦ Queer Nation / Boston. Community Church of Boston, Copley Square above Back Bay Bistro. 7:30 p.m., first and third Mondays each month. Info: 577-8123.

19 TUESDAY

Framingham ♦ Framingham G/L Youth Group. People 22 and under, meets first and third Tuesdays each month. Civic League Bldg., 214 Concord St. 6 to 7:30 p.m. Info: write P.O. Box 426, S. Framingham, MA 01701.

Boston ♦ Gay Fathers of Greater Boston. First and third Tuesday each month. Lindemann Center, 2nd fl. 8 to 10 p.m. Info 742-7897.

Boston ♦ Gay Fathers of Greater Boston: Discussion: Confronting Our Own Prejudices. 8 to 10 p.m. Lindemann Ctr., 25 Staniford St., Boston Rm. (Plaza Lvl.). 742-7897.

20 WEDNESDAY

Boston ♦ Downtown Lesbians Brown Bag Lunch. 12:30 p.m. Info: Julie 725-3562.

Boston ♦ NOW Lesbian Rights Task Force. 7 p.m. Boston NOW office, 971 Comm. Ave. 782-1056.

Boston ♦ Time for Reflection and Prayer During Lent. MCC. 7 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. 427-0420.

Worcester ♦ Supporters of Worcester Area G/L Youth. Open to G/LB youth 21 and under. First and



third Wednesday each month. United Congregational Church, 6 Institute Rd. 7 p.m. Info: (508) 755-0005.

21 THURSDAY

Boston ♦ "Beyond AIDS 101," an overview of AIDS and HIV. 6 p.m. Third Thursday each month. AAC Rm. 401, 131 Clarendon St. Info: 437-6200 *264.

Boston ♦ FCHC Living Well Series: "It Can Be Hard To Be HIV Negative." 7 to 9 p.m. Old South Church, Guild Rm., 645 Boylston St. 267-0900.

Northampton ♦ Valley Gay Alliance. First and third Thursdays each month. Basement of the Unitarian Church, 22 Main St. 7:30 p.m. (413) 527-5310.

22 Friday

Boston ♦ Game Night. Board and parlor games every other Friday, 8 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St. Info: 247-2927.

Boston ♦ Friday Night at the Movies: "Red River." 8:05 p.m. The Center, 338 Newbury St., rm. 203. \$2.

SUNDAYS

Boston ♦ Different Strokes Swim Team. Coached workouts for swimmers of all abilities. Noon at Boston City Hosp. swimming pool. Ed 767-0449.

Boston ♦ BAGLY Drop-In Center. (BAGLY = Boston Alliance of G/L Youth.) St. John the Evangelist Church, 35 Bowdoin. (800) 42BAGLY.

Boston ♦ Boston Strikers Soccer Club. Weekly novice and club scrimmages. All levels. 3 p.m. Info: Erik 423-0929 or Jeff 876-7612.

Somerville ♦ Boston Strikers G/L Indoor Soccer. Through 3/24/91. Novice pgm. 4 p.m. Full club scrimmage 5 p.m. Winter Hill School. \$5 gym fee. Info: Jeffrey 876-7612.

Boston ♦ Dignity Mass. Liturgy followed by a social hour. St. John the Evangelist Church, 35 Bowdoin St. 5:30 p.m. 536-6518.

Boston ♦ Western Orthodox Church Mass. Arlington St. Church, 351 Boylston St. 227-5794.

Boston ♦ Metropolitan Community Church Worship/Fellowship. 131 Cambridge St. (near Gov't Ctr.). 7 p.m. Info: Rev. Tanis 437-0420.

Boston ♦ Narcotics Anonymous. L/GM. The Center, 338 Newbury St. 8 p.m. 247-2927.

Boston ♦ The Gay Dating Show, WUNR 1600AM. 10:30pm-2:30am. Lesbians and gay men.

MONDAYS

Boston ♦ Chiltern Downhill Skiing Lessons. Monday nights at Nashoba Valley ski area. Info: Jim 843-3966.

Boston ♦ Monday Night Dinners for PWA's and Friends. About 100 people with AIDS and their friends meet every Monday at AIDS ACTION for dinner. No reservations required. 6 p.m. AIDS ACTION, 131 Clarendon St. 437-6200.

Dorchester ♦ Alcoholics Anonymous. First Parish Church, Mtg. Hs. Hill. Beginners 6:30, hardhats 8 p.m.

Boston ♦ Boston Bisexual Women's Network Coordinating Comm. The Center, 338 Newbury St. 247-2927.

Worcester ♦ AIDS Project Worcester. A support group for family, friends, concerned others dealing with HIV. 305 Shrewsbury St. 7-8:30 p.m. (508)755-3773.

Boston ♦ Northern Lights Alternatives Monday Night Rap Group. Talk to others lIVING with HIV. 38 Appleton St. 7:30-9 p.m. Info: Ann O'Rourke 694-0964.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbian Rap Group. The Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 8-10 p.m. 354-8807.

TUESDAYS

Providence, RI ♦ ACT UP/Rhode Island. Call for meeting place (401) 461-4191.

Boston ♦ ACT UP/Boston. The Living Center, YWCA, 140 Clarendon St. 7 p.m. 49-ACT UP.

Cambridge ♦ 30+ Lesbian Rap. The Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 7-8:30. 354-8807.

Cambridge ♦ Bisexual Women's Rap. The Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 7-8:30. 354-8807.

Medford Radio ♦ "We the People" -- with feminist Sheila Parks. WMFO 91.5FM. 7-9 a.m. Tufts U. radio.

Worcester ♦ Support Group for HIV+ G/B Men and Their Significant Others. Closed meeting. AIDS Project Worcester. 305 Shrewsbury St. 7-8:30 p.m. (508) 755-3773.

Boston ♦ L/G Freedom Trail Band Rehearsals. No

audition necessary. Mass College of Art, Longwood and Brookline Ave. 7:15 p.m. 266-0628.

Cambridge TV ♦ PrideTime -- Boston G/L TV, with Jim Voltz. Cambridge Cable Channel 19. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAYS

Hyde Park ♦ Women's Pick-Up Hockey. MDC Hyde Park Rink (near Dedham). 8 to 9 a.m. Info: Janice 326-1600 x350.

Boston ♦ Informal Mtg. with Mayor Flynn's Liasion to the Gay Community. Ann Sanders will be available 2 to 6 p.m. each Wednesday. No appt. necessary, but Ms. Sanders can be reached at 725-3485.

Boston ♦ Boston Alliance of G/L Youth (BAGLY). Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. New persons' meeting 6 p.m.; women and men meet separately 6:45 to 7:30; general meeting 7:30 p.m. 523-7363 or 1-800-42BAGLY.

Cambridge ♦ Lesbian Al-Anon with child care, wheelchair accessible. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 6:30 to 8 p.m. 354-8807.

Springfield ♦ Names Project Meeting. New chapter with weekly quilting meetings. All welcome. Frontier. 19 Pearl St. 7 to 10 p.m. (413)788-7459

Boston ♦ Bisexual Adult Children of Alcoholics. Mass. General Hospital. 7:30 p.m. Info: Marge 259-1559.

Boston ♦ Positive Directions. Peer-led support group for HIV+ people. Boston Living Center, 140 Clarendon. 7:30 p.m. 262-3456.

Worcester ♦ Support Group for HIV+ who are in Substance Abuse Recovery. Closed meeting. AIDS Project Worcester. 305 Shrewsbury St. 7:30 to 9 p.m. (508) 755-3773.

THURSDAYS

Boston ♦ Boston Area Rape Crisis Center drop-in group for women who have been raped. 492-RAPE.

Boston ♦ Names Project Quilting Bee -- for the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Sewing supplies and support provided. Boston Living Ctr., 140 Clarendon St. 7th flr. 7 to 9 p.m. Info 451-9003.

Boston ♦ The Coalition for L/G Civil Rights. Meets every Thursday. The Center, rm 202K. 338 Newbury St. 6:30 to 8 p.m. 828-3039.

Portsmouth, NH ♦ Out and About. A lesbian social and support group. Info: Keryn (603) 749-5852.

Boston ♦ Positive Directions. Peer-led support group for HIV+ people. Boston Living Center, 140 Clarendon. 7:30 p.m. 262-3456.

Provincetown ♦ Positive PWA Coalition Weekdy Rap Session. 7:30. 155 Bradford St. Peer led. (508) 487-3998.

Boston ♦ The Group. Discussion and social hour. The Center, 338 Newbury St. 266-1129.

Boston ♦ L/G Ice Hockey Practices and Intersquad Scrimmages. All levels. 9 p.m. Grtr Bos. rink. Info: John 350-6063, Al 522-1408.

Cambridge ♦ GAMIT Study Break. (GAMIT = Gays at MIT.) GAMIT lounge, room 50-306, 142 Memorial Dr.

FRIDAYS

Watertown ♦ GLOW: G/L of Watertown. 395-4664.

Boston ♦ GCN Friday Night Stuffing Party. Come stuff the paper, eat pizza, and make new friends. GCN, 62 Berkeley St. 5 p.m. 426-4469.

Boston ♦ Friday Night At The Movies. The Boston Living Center. 140 Clarendon St. Free. 7 p.m. 236-1012.

Boston ♦ Positive Directions. Peer-led support group for HIV+ people. Boston Living Center, 140 Clarendon. 7:30 p.m. 262-3456.

SATURDAYS

Boston ♦ Frontrunners. Meet at Metropolitan Health Club for 2 to 5-mi. run along Charles. Lockers and showers complimentary. 10 a.m. Also: Tues. 12:15 p.m. at MHC; Wed. 6:45 p.m. at Hatch Shell. 282-0013.

Cambridge ♦ Single Mothers' Support Group. Free drop-in group with child care, alternate Saturdays. Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 11am-12:30 p.m. 354-8807.

Boston ♦ Pink Flamingos. TV/TS of New England. 4 to 6 p.m. 338 Newbury St., 2nd flr. 247-2927.

Boston TV ♦ PrideTime -- Boston G/L TV, with Jim Voltz. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30 p.m.

By Eric E. Rofes

I've been queer for a long time. I was queer before I was gay. I was queer before I was aware of sexual orientation at all. I've been queer as long as I can remember.

Sometimes I think I was queer since I was a baby. When people looked into the window at the hospital at the newborn infants, they could tell something was odd about me. Usually I think I've always been this way; I was born queer.

These days, lots of people are taking up the label queer. We hear "queer power," "Queer Nation," "queer planet." I'm glad this is happening. It should have happened a long time ago.

I'm surprised that I get weirded out around some of these neo-queers these days. Don't get me wrong—anyone who wants to take on the title is my pal. But I expected to have something in common with other queers. I thought we'd have the same politics or the same view of the world. Maybe I hoped we'd have the same bizarre sense of humor or the same experiences feeling out-of-it through most of our lives. With some queers, I feel this kinship. With others, I feel queer among the queers.

The Birth of a Queer

I have a hard time when people discuss their queerness in political terms; I want to hear what their life experiences have been like. I want to say, "Enough of the intellectual analysis! Tell me how it *feels*! When did you first feel queer? When do you feel totally queer? How do you feel about feeling queer?"

I'll answer these questions for myself. My queerness feels like a combination of some of the most primal feelings of my life; at odds with the norm, special (but not in an acceptable way), out-of-it, and essentially alienated. These are the feelings I remember most from childhood. I felt different, no matter how I tried to fit in.

My first queer feelings were twisted around some of my very basic identities: I was a boy who wanted to play with the girls; I was a Jew who didn't sing Jesus songs at the kindergarten holiday pageant; I couldn't throw or catch a baseball. One of my earliest queer memories was when I was in a friend's basement and we were playing Dog. I had

My life as a queer

Queer (kwēr), *a.* [*Compar.* **QUEERER**, **QUEEREST**.] [*G.* *quer* cross, oblique, athwart (*op* of a queer fellow), *OHG.* *twer*, *twerh*, to D. *quars*, *AS.* *pweorh* thwart, bent, overr thwart, transverse, *Goth.* *þwairh* *erh.* to L. *torguere* to twist, and *E.* *throu* **QUEER, THROUGH, TEWART, c.**] 1. At variance with the usual or normal; differing in some odd way from the ordinary; odd; singular; strange; when applied to a story or act. "A queer look." 2. Mysterious; suspicious; questionable transaction. [*Collog.*] **Queer, n.** Counterfeit money. [*Slang*] To shove the queer, to put counterfeit money in circulation. [*Slang*]

him on the end of a leash and was making him bark for me. I remember the door at the top of the stairs opening, hearing our mothers' footsteps descending quickly, followed by the accusations and the judgments and the shame. We were only playing Dog.

I grew up feeling alienated from the world around me. I lived in fantasies and dreams. I drew elaborated queer drawings of magic worlds occupied entirely by oddballs like me. I lost myself in Nancy Drew books and George MacDonald fairy tales. I identified with all the weirdos Alice met in Wonderland. When I watched *The Wizard of Oz*, I knew I must be a descendant of the Scarecrow. I read and reread Dr. Seuss books and found kindred spirits on the pages of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*.

The alienation grew as I moved through childhood into adolescence. I struggled to find ways to cope with being a weird kid. I was a successful student. I made friends with some of the jock guys. I latched onto popular

icons like the Beatles (even though my true interest at this age focused on imagining myself as Ann Margaret in *Bye Bye Birdie*). No matter how good my grades were, or how successful I was at looking like I fit in, I always felt out-of-it. The same can be said about me today.

Thinking Gay Lib was the Answer

I was not a happy young queer and I could have been. Feeling different from one's peers isn't of itself a bad feeling. I could have felt like my oddities were good. I could have felt proud to be different. Feeling at peace with my alienation was a definite option. These days I *do* feel all these positive feelings about myself. As a kid though, I saw other queers who had something I didn't have then: *they were okay with themselves*. They weren't trying to cover up or fit in or become popular. They felt fine about being weirdos or nerds or fags or bozos. They were at peace with themselves while I had the burden of being—not only a queer,—but a self-hating

queer. I didn't want to be the oddball I was.

As a teenager, I began to feel that the focus of my queerness was the fact that the one thing that got me hot was guys. In a world filled with trips to the drive-in to see *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love Story*, I felt like the only fag on Long Island. In my mind, all my alienation could be explained by the fact that I was a homo. This was the secret that held the key to my abnormalities.

And then Gay Liberation happened and I thought I'd found the answer. After spending repressed years secretly identifying with the rage of the Black Power movement, embracing the daring of Women's Liberation and fantasizing myself as an anti-war SDS protester, it was Gay Liberation that knocked on the door of my queer closet and lured me out. It was Gay Liberation that seemed to seize me by the collar and shake me and say, "This is about you, Mr. Queer! This is your one chance to make the world safe for people like you. Find the courage now, or you'll have blown your big chance, buster!"

I emerged—for the first time in all my queerdom—into a world occupied by other bizzarros; femme men with names like Taffy and Clara, butch leatherdykes, acne-scarred sexhomos who spent their nights in tearooms, fat women with hair on their faces, drugged-out poets who drooled when they talked. I remember sitting around a meeting of some group or other and looking at the crowd I was hanging out with and thinking, "So this is who the dykes and fags of the world are; all those style-less, personality-less, sexless librarians; those skinny, braindead lunatics that are singled out in the boondocks as 'harmless town fools.'"

Finally, I found people with whom I identified. Oh, we were all different from each other, but we met common ground at our gut feeling of being out-of-it. Even when we were together, we were never really together. We were like a melting pot that wouldn't melt, or like a rainbow where the colors wouldn't adhere to one another. Our attempts at socializing together never really came off. None of us had the social skills to be comfortable with other human beings. We were at our best when we were doing political work, but even then, the rough edges were mighty rough.

Those Gay Lib years were among the
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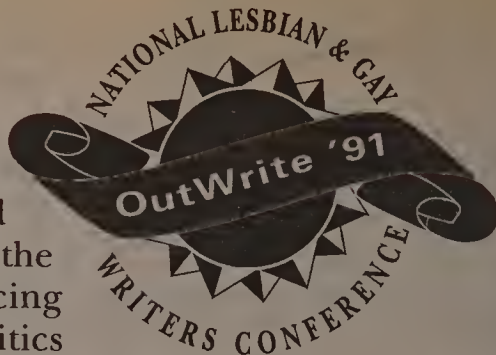
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